

Practical Discourses
UPON THE
CONSIDERATION
OF
Our Latter End ;
AND THE
Danger and Mischief
OF
Delaying Repentance.

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Delivered at the
 Church of St. Andrew, Cambridge.
 By JOHN DODD, D.D.
 Rector of the Church of St. Andrew, Cambridge.
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Printed for J. G. 1711.
 At the Sign of the Gun in
 St. Pauls Church-yard.

SERMON I.

The Consideration of our latter End.

PSALM XC. 12.

So teach us to ~~number~~ our days,
that we may apply our hearts
unto wisdom.

THIS *Psalms* is upon several peculiar accompts very remarkable; for its antiquity, in which it perhaps doth not yeild to any parcel of Scripture; for the eminency of its Authour, *Moses* the Man of God; the greatest of the ancient Prophets (most in favour, and (as it were)

B

most

most intimate with God :) 'Tis also remarkable for the form and matter thereof, both affording much usefull instruction. In it we have a great Prince, the Governour of a numerous People sequestering his Mind from the management of publick Affairs to private Meditations ; from beholding the present outward appearances, to considering the real nature and secret causes of things ; In the midst of all the Splendour and Pomp, of all the stir and tumult about him he observes the frailty of humane condition, he discerns the Providence of God justly ordering all ; this he does not onely in way of wise consideration, but of serious devotion, moulding his observations into pious acknowledgments, and earnest Prayers to God ; thus while he casts one eye upon Earth viewing the occurrences there, lifting up the other to Heaven ; there seeing God's all-governing Hand, thence seeking his gracious Favour and Mercy. Thus doth here that great and
good

good Man teach us all, (more particularly men of high Estate, and much Business) to find opportunities of withdrawing their thoughts from those things, which commonly amuse them (the Cares, the Glories, the Pleasures of this World) and fixing them upon matters more improvably to devotion; the transitoriness of their Condition, and their subjection to God's just Providence ; joining also to these Meditations suitable acts of Religion, due acknowledgments to God and humble Prayers. This was his practice among the greatest encumbrances that any Man could have ; and it should also be ours. Of those his devotions, addressed to God, the Words are part, which I have chosen for the subject of my meditation and present discourse ; concerning the meaning of which I shall first touch somewhat ; then propound that observable in them, which I design to insist upon.

Psa. 39. 4.

The Prophet *David* hath in the 39th *Psalme* a Prayer very near in words, and of kin (it seems) in sense to this here ; *Lord*, prays he, *Make me to know my end, and the measure of my days, what it is, that I may know how frail I am* : Concerning the drift of which place, as well as of this here, it were obvious to conceive, that both these Prophets do request of God, that he would discover to them the definite term of their life (which by his decree he had fixed, or however by his universal prescience he did discern ; concerning which we have these words in *Job*, *Seeing man's days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds, that he cannot pass*) we might, I say, at first hearing be apt to imagine, that their Prayer unto God is, (for the comfort of their mind burthened with afflictions, or for their better direction in the management of their remaining time of life) that God
would

Job 14. 5.

would reveal unto them the determinate length of their life. But this sense, which the Words seem so naturally to hold forth is by many of the Fathers rejected; for that the knowledge of our lives determinate measure is not a fit matter of Prayer to God; that being a secret reserved by God to himself, which to inquire into favours of presumptuous curiosity; the universal validity of which reason I will not debate; but shall defer so much to their judgment, as to suppose that the numbring of our days (according to their sense) doth here onely imply a confused indefinite computation of our days number, or the length of our life; such as, upon which it may appear, that necessarily our life cannot be long (not according to the accompt mentioned in this *Psalm* (the same with that of *Solon*, in *Herodotus*) above seventy or eighty Years, especially as to purposes of health, strength, content) will probably by reason of

various accidents, to which it is exposed, be much shorter (seven or ten Years according to a moderate esteem) may possibly, from surprises undiscoverable, be very near to its period; by few instances removed from death (a Year, a Month, a Day, it may be somewhat less.) This I shall allow to be the *Arithmetick* that *Moses* here desires to learn; whence it doth follow that teaching (or making to know, so it is in the *Hebrew*) doth import here (as it doth other-where frequently

Οὐ γὰρ ὅτι φέρων ἐχρήσ-
ται ἀνθρώποις ἀγνοεῖν, ὅτι ἀνθρώ-
ποις ζῶν ὅτι θνήσκον, ἐπὶ ὅτι
χρόνον εἰς τὸ ἀποθανεῖν. Plut.
ad Apoll. p. 202.

Quis est tam stultus, quam-
vis sit adolescens, cui sit explo-
raturum se vel ad vesperum esse
victurum. Cic. de Sen.

in Scripture) God's af-
fording the Grace to
know practically, or
with serious regard to
consider this state and
measure of our life (for
in speculation no Man
can be ignorant of hu-

mane lifes brevity and uncertain-
ty; but most Men are so negligent
and stupid, as not to regard it suf-
ficiently, not to employ this know-
ledge to any good purpose.) This

Inter-

Interpretation I chuse, being in it self plausible enough, and countenanced by so good authority ; yet the former might well enough (by good consequence, if not so immediately) serve my design : Or be a ground able to support the discourse I intend to build upon the Words ; the subject whereof briefly will be this, that the consideration of our lives certain and necessary brevity and frailty, is a mean proper and apt to dispose us toward the wise conduct of our remaining life ; to which purpose such a consideration seems alike available, as the knowledge of its punctual or definite measure ; or more than it ; upon the same, or greater reasons.

As for the latter clause, *that we may apply our hearts to wisdom* ; 'tis according to the *Hebrew*, *And we shall bring the heart to wisdom* ; implying, the application of our hearts to wisdom to be consequent upon the skill and practice (bestowed by God) of thus computing our days.

De fin. II. p.
95.

As for *wisdom*, that may denote either *sapience*, a habit of knowing what is true ; or *prudence*, a disposition of chusing what is good ; we may here understand both, especially the latter ; for, as *Tully* saith of Philosophy, *Omnis summa Philosophiæ ad beate vivendum refertur*, The summ or whole of Philosophy refers to living happily ; so all Divine Wisdom doth respect good practice.

The word also comprehends all the consequences and adjuncts of such wisdom (for so commonly such words are wont by way

*Natura dedit usuram vitæ,
tanquam pecuniæ, nulla præstituta die. Tusc. quæst. I. p. 326.*

of *metonymie* to denote, together with the things primarily signified, all that naturally flow from, or that usually are conjoined with them) in brief (to cease from more explaining that, which is in it self conspicuous enough) I so understand the Text, as if the Prophet had thus expressed himself: Since, O Lord, all things are in thy hand, and Sovereign disposal ; since it appears that

Man's

Man's life is so short and frail, so vexatious and miserable, so exposed to the just effects of thy displeasure; we humbly beseech thee, so to instruct us by thy Wisdom, so to dispose us by thy grace; that we may effectually know; that we may seriously consider the brevity and uncertainty of our lives durance; whence we may be induced to understand, regard, and chuse those things which good reason dictates best for us; which according to true Wisdom, it most concerns us to know and perform. From which sense of the words we might infer many usefull documents, and draw matter of much wholsome discourse; but passing over all the rest, I shall onely insist upon that one point, which I before intimated, *viz.* that the serious consideration of the shortness and frailty of our life is a proper instrument conducive to the bringing our hearts to Wisdom, to the making us to discern, attend unto, embrace and prosecute such things

things as are truly best for us ; that it is available to the prudent conduct and management of our life ; the truth of which proposition is grounded upon the divine Prophet his opinion : he apprehended such a knowledge or consideration to be a profitable means of inducing his heart to Wisdom ; wherefore he prays God to grant it him in order to that end ; supposing that effect would proceed from this cause. And that it is so in way of reasonable influence I shall endeavour to shew by some following reasons.

1 John 1. 17. *Love not the world ; for — the world passeth away, and the desire thereof.*

I. The serious consideration of our life's frailty and shortness will confer to our right valuation (or esteem) of things, and consequently to our well-placing, and our duly moderating our cares, affections and endeavours about them. For as we value things, so are we used to affect them, to spend our thoughts upon them, to be earnest

nest in pursuance or avoiding of them. There be two sorts of things we converse about, good and bad ; the former, according to the degree of their appearance so to us (that is, according to our estimation of them) we naturally love, delight in, desire and pursue ; the other likewise in proportion to our opinion concerning them, we do more or less loath and shun. Our Actions therefore being all thus directed

and grounded, to esteem things aright both in kind and degree (ἐκ γί-

59) ἀποδιδοῦναι τῷ ἀξίῳ, to assign every thing its due price, as *Epictetus* speaks ; *quanti quid-*

Primum est, ut quanti quid-que sit judices ; secundum, ut impetum ad illa capias ordinatum temperatumque ; tertium, ut inter impetum tuum, actionemque conveniat, ut in omnibus istis tibi ipsi consentias. Sen. Epist. 89.

que sit judicare, to judge what each thing is worth as *Seneca*,) is in order the first, in degree a main part of wisdom ; and as so is frequently by wise men commended. Now among qualities that commend or vilifie things unto us, duration and certainty have a chief place ; they
often

often alone suffice to render things valuable or contemptible. Why is Gold more precious than Glass or Crystal? why prefer we a Ruby before a Rose, or a Gilly-flower? 'tis not because those are more serviceable, more beautifull, more gratefull to our senses than these (it is plainly otherwise) but because these are brittle and fading, those solid and permanent; these we cannot hope to retain the use or pleasure of long; those we may promise our selves to enjoy so long as we please; whence on the other side is it, that we little fear or shun any thing how painfull, how offensive so ever, being assured of its soon passing over, the biting of a flea, or the prick in letting blood? The reason is evident; and that in general nothing can on either hand be considerable (either to value or disesteem) which is of a short continuance. Upon this ground therefore let us tax the things concerning us whether good or bad, relating to this life,

life, or to our future state; and first the good things relating to this life; thence we shall be disposed to judge truly concerning them, what their just price is, how much of affection, care and endeavour they deserve to have expended on them. In general, and in the lump concerning them all St. Paul tells us, that τὸ σχῆμα τῆς κόσμου παρέρχεται, *the shape or fashion* (all 1 Cor. 7. 31. that is apparent or sensible) in *this present world doth flit, and soon give us the go-by*: We gaze a-while upon these things, as *in transitu*, or *intra conspectum*; as they pass by us, and keep a-while in sight; but they are presently gone from us, or we from them. They are but like objects represented in a Glass; which having viewed a-while, we must shortly turn our backs, or shut our eyes upon them, then all vanishes and disappears unto us. Whence he well infers an indifferency of affection toward them; a slackness

— πάντα παρέργεται ἡμᾶς,
Εἰ δ' μὴ, ἀλλ' αὐτοὶ πάντα
παρέρχονται. Gr. Epig. Anthol.

1 John 2. 17.
ἡ ἐμὴ οἰκία
καὶ οὗτος.

slackness in the enjoyment of them to be required of us; a *using this world, as if we used it not*; a *buying, as if we were not to possess*; a *weeping, as if we wept not*; and a *rejoycing, as if we rejoyced not*; a kind of negligence and unconcernedness about these things. *The world* (saith St. John) *passeth away, and the desire thereof*; what-ever seemeth most lovely and desirable in the World is very flitting; how-ever our desire and our enjoyment thereof must suddenly cease. Imagine a man therefore possessed of all worldly goods, arm'd with power, flourishing in credit, flowing with plenty, swimming in all delight (such as were sometime *Priamus, Polycrates, Cræsus, Pompey*) yet since he is withall supposed a man and mortal; subject both to fortune and death; none of those things can he reasonably confide, or much satisfy himself in; they may be violently divorced from him by fortune, they must naturally be loosed from him by death;

death ; the closest union here cannot last longer than till death us depart ; wherefore no man upon such account can truly call or (if he consider well) heartily esteem himself happy ; a *man cannot* hence (as the Eccl. 1. 3, &c. most able judge, and trusty voucher of the commodities doth pronounce) *receive profit or content from any labour he taketh* (upon these transitory things) *under the sun.* Why then (let me inquire) do we so cumber our heads with care, so rack our hearts with passion, so waste our spirits with incessant toil about these transitory things ? why do we so highly value, so ardently desire, so eagerly pursue, so fondly delight in, so impatiently want, or lose, so passionately contend for and emulate one another in regard to these bubbles ; forfeiting and foregoing our homebred most precious goods, tranquillity and repose, either of mind or body, for them ? Why erect we such mighty fabricks of expectation and confidence upon
such

*Commorandi
natura nobis
diversorium
dedit, non ha-
bitandi locum.*

Cic. de Sen.

1 Pet. 2. 11. 1.

Heb. 13. 11.

11. 15.

1 Chron. 29.

15.

Job 14. 1.

Psal. 78. 39.

Jam. 4. 14.

Isa. 64. 6.

Psal. 102. 3.

90. 5. 9.

103. 15. 39.

5. 144. 4.

119. 19.

Psal. 103. 15.

Isa. 40. 6.

such unsteady sands? Why dress we up these our Inns, as if they were our homes, and are as carefull about a few nights lodging here, as if we designed an everlasting aboad (we that are but *sojourners and pilgrims* here, and have *no fixed habitation* upon earth; who come forth like a flower, and are soon cut down; flee like a shadow, and continue not; are winds passing away, and coming not again; who fade all like a leaf, whose life is a vapour appearing for a little time, and then vanishing away; whose days are a handbreadth, and age as nothing; whose days are consumed like smoak, and years are spent as a tale. Who wither like the grass, upon which we feed; and crumble as the dust, of which we are compacted; for thus the Scripture by apposite comparisons represents our condition) yet we build (like the Men of *Agri- gentum*) as if we were to dwell here for ever; and hoard up, as if we were to enjoy after many ages; and inquire, as if we would never have

have done knowing? The Citizens of *Croton* (a Town in *Italy*) had a manner (it is said) of inviting to Feasts a Year before the time, that the Guests in appetite and garb might come well prepared to them; do we not usually resemble them in this ridiculous solicitude and curiosity; *spes inchoando longas*, commencing designs, driving on projects, which a longer time than our life would not suffice to accomplish? How deeply do we concern our selves in all that is said or done; when the morrow all will be done away and forgotten? when (excepting what our duty to God, and charity towards men requires of us, and that which concerns our future eternal state) what is done in the World, who gets or loses, which of the spokes in fortune's wheel is up, and which down, is of very little consequence to us. But the more to abstract our minds from, and temper our affections about these secular matters, let us examine particularly

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larly by this standard, whether the most valued things in this World deserve that estimate which they bear in the common Market, or which popular opinion assigns them.

1 Pet. 2. 24.

1. To begin then with that which takes chief place, which the World most dotes on, which seems most great and eminent among men; secular state and grandeur, might and prowess, honour and reputation, favour and applause of men, all the objects of humane pride and ambition; of this kind, St. Peter thus pronounces; *πᾶσα δόξα ἀνθρώπων*, *All the glory of the men is as the flower of the grass; the grass is dried up, and the flower thereof doth fall off*; 'tis as the flower of the grass, how specious so ever, yet the most fading and failing part thereof; the grass it self will soon wither, and the flower doth commonly fall off before that. We cannot hold this flower of worldly glory beyond our short time of life; and we may easily

ly much sooner be deprived of it :
 Many tempests of fortune may beat
 it down, many violent hands may
 crop it, 'tis apt of its self to fade
 upon the stalk ; how-ever the Sun
 (the influence of age and time)
 will assuredly burn and dry it up,
 with our life that upholds it. *Sure-* Psal. 62. 9.
ly (saith the *Psalmist*) *men of low*
degree are vanity, and men of high
degree are a lye : Men of high de-
 gree ; the mighty Princes, the fa-
 mous Captains, the subtile Statef-
 men, the grave Senatours ; they
 who turn and toss about the World
 at their pleasure ; who, (in the *Pro-* Isa. 14. 17.
phet's language) *make the Earth*
tremble, and shake Kingdoms : Even
 these, they are a lie ; (saith he, who
 himself was none of the least confi-
 derable among them, and by experi-
 ence well knew their condition, the
 greatest and most glorious Man of
 his time King *David.*) They are a
 lie ; that is, their state presents some-
 thing of brave and admirable to the
 eye of Men ; but 'tis onely *deceptio*

visus ; a shew without a substance ; it doth but delude the careless spectators with false appearance ; it hath nothing under it solid or stable ; being laid in the balance (the royal *Prophet* there subjoins ; that is, being weighed in the scales of right judgment, being thoroughly considered) it will prove lighter than vanity it self ; it is less valuable than mere emptiness, and nothing it self ; that saying sounds like an *hyperbole*, but it may be true in a strict sense: Seeing, that the care and pains in maintaining it, the fear and jealousy of losing it, the envy, obloquy and danger that surround it, the snares it hath in it, and temptations inclining men to be puffed up with Pride, to be insolent and injurious, to be corrupt with pleasure (with other bad concomitants thereof) do more than countervail what-ever either of imaginary worth or real convenience may be in it. Perhaps could it without much care, trouble and hazard continue for ever, or for a long

long time, it might be thought somewhat considerable; but since its duration is uncertain and short; since *man in honour abideth not, but is like the beasts that perish*; that they who look so *like Gods*, and are called so, and are worshipped as so, yet *must die like* (like men, yea like sheep shall be laid in the grave;) Since, as 'tis said of the King of Babylon in *Esay*; *their pomp must be brought down to the grave, and the noise of their viols; the worm shall be spread under them, and the worm shall cover them*; seeing that a moment of time shall extinguish all their lustre, and still all that tumult about them; that they must be disrobed of their Purple, and be cloathed with Corruption; that their so spacious and splendid Palaces must soon be exchanged for close darksome Coffins; that both their own breath, and the breath of them who now applaud them must be stopped; that they who now bow to them, may presently trample on them; and

Psal. 82. 6.

Psal. 49. 12, &c.

Isa. 14. 11.

Isa. 14. 16.

they who to day trembled at their presence, may the morrow scornfully insult upon their memory : *Is this the man* (will they say, as they did of that great King) *who made the Earth to tremble ; that did shake Kingdoms ; that made the World as a Wilderness ; and destroyed the Kingdoms thereof ?* Since this is the fate of the greatest, and most glorious among Men, what reason can there be to admire their condition ; to prize such vain and short-liv'd pre-eminences ? For who can accompt it a great happiness to be styled and respected as a Prince, to enjoy all the Powers and Prerogatives of highest dignity for a day, or two ; then being obliged to descend into a fordid and despicable Estate ? Who values the fortune of him that is brought forth upon the Stage to act the Part of a Prince ; though he be attired there, and attended as such ; hath all the garb and ceremony, the ensigns and appurtenances of Majesty about him ; speaks and behaves him-
self

self imperiously; is flattered and worshipped accordingly; yet, who in his heart doth adore this Idol; doth admire this mockery of greatness? Why not? because after an hour or two the Play is over, and this Man's reign is done. And what great difference is there between this and the greatest worldly state? between *Alexander* in the History, and *Alexander* on the Stage? Are not (in the *Psalmist's* accompt) *all our* P^{sal.} 90.
years spent as a tale that is told; or, as a Fable, that is acted? This in comparison of that, what is it at most, but telling the same story, acting the same Part a few times over? What are a few years more than a few hours repeated not very often? not so often as to make any considerable difference; so a great Emperour reflected: *τι διαφέρει τελευτῆς ἀνθρώπου; what* (said he) Anton. IV. 50.
doth the age of an infant, dying within three days, differ from that of Nestor, who lived three ages of men; since both shall be past, and ended; both Sen. Ep. 99.
 then 24.

then meet, and thereby become equal; since considering the immense time that runs on, and how little a part thereof any of us takes up (*juvenes & senes in æquo sumus*) we are all alike young and old; as a drop and a Pint bottle in compare to the

Mibi ne diuturnum quidem quidquam videtur, in quo est aliquid extremum, &c. Cic. de Senect.

Ocean are in a sort equal, that is, both altogether inconsiderable. *Quid enim diu est, ubi finis est?* saith St. *Austine*: what can be long that shall be ended; which coming to that pass is as if it never had been? Since then upon this account (upon worldly accompts, I speak all this; and excepting that Dignity and Power may be Talents bestowed by God, or advantages to serve God, and promote the good of Men; excepting also the relation Persons justly instated in them bear to God as his Deputies and Ministers; in which respects much reverence is due to their Persons, much value to their Places; even the more, by how much less their present outward

ward Estate is considerable, and because at present they receive so slender a reward for all their cares and pains employ'd in the discharge of their Offices; this I enterpose to prevent mistakes, lest our discourse should seem to disparage, or detract from the reverence due to Persons in eminent Place. But since, under this caution) all worldly Power and Glory appear so little valuable, the consideration hereof may avail to moderate our affections about them; to quell all ambitious desires of them, and all vain complacencies in them. For why should we so eagerly seek and pursue such empty shadows, which if we catch, we in effect catch nothing; and whatever it is, doth presently slip out of our hands? Why do we please our selves in such evanid dreams? is it not much better to rest quiet and content in any station wherein God hath placed us, than to trouble our selves and others in climbing higher to a Precipice, where we can hardly

Psal. 90. 6.

Ant. IV. § 50.

Psal. 49. 16.

73. 17. 37.
1.

ly stand upright, and whence we shall certainly tumble down into the grave? This consideration is also a remedy, proper to remove all regret and envy grounded upon such regards. For why, though suppose Men of small worth, or vertue should flourish in Honour and Power, shall we repine thereat? Is it not as if one should envy to a Butterfly, its gaudy Wings; to a Tulip its beautiful colours, to the Grass its pleasant verdure; that Grass, to which in this *Psalme* we are compared; *which in the morning flourisheth, and groweth up, in the evening is cut down and withereth?* I may say of this discourse with the *Philosopher*, *ἰδιωτικὸν μὲν ὅμως ἔστι ἀντικὸν βοήθημα*, 'tis a homely remedy (there may be divers better ones) yet hath its efficacy; for *David* himself made use thereof more than once: *Be not, faith he, afraid (or troubled) when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is encreased; for when he dieth he shall carry nothing away, his glory*

glory shall not descend with him. I was (saith he again) *envious at Prov. 23. 17. the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked; but I went into the sanctuary, then understood I their end; surely thou didst set them in slippery places — how are they brought into desolation as in a moment: Thus considering the lubricity and transitoriness of that Prosperity, which foolish and wicked Men enjoyed, did serve to cure that envious distemper, which began to affect the good man's Heart.*

2. But let us descend from Dignity and Power (that is from names and shews) to somewhat seeming more real and substantial; to Riches; that great and general Idol, the most devoutly adored that ever any hath been in the World; which hath a Temple almost in every House, an Altar in every Heart; to the gaining of which most of the thoughts, most of the labours of Men immediately tend; in the Possession of which Men com-

1 Cor. 8. 4.

Prov. 23. 5.

"OAGIG,
Beatus, &c.
pro devite.
Hab. 2. 9.

commonly deem the greatest Happiness doth consist. But this consideration we discourse about, will easily discover, that even this, as all other Idols, is *nothing in the World*, nothing true and solid; Will (I say) justify that advice and verifie that assertion of the *Wise-man*: *Labour not for riches, wilt thou set thy heart upon that which is not?* it well applied will pluck down the high Places reared to this great Idol of Clay in Men's Hearts; will confute the common Conceits and Phrases, which so beautifie Wealth; shewing that whoever dotes thereon is more truly and properly styled a miserable Man, than a happy, or blessed one: For is he not indeed miserable, who *makes lies his refuge*, who confides in that which will deceive and disappoint him? The *Prophet* assures us so: *Woe* (saith the *Prophet Habbakuk*) *woe be to him, who coveteth an evil covetousness to his house; that he may set his nest on high, that he may*

may be delivered from the power of evil: Men (he implies) imagine by getting Riches, they have secured and raised themselves above the reach of all mischief? But ye see it was in the *Prophet's* judgement a wofull mistake. *St. Paul* 1 Tim. 6. 19. doth warn Men (very emphatically) *not to hope* ἐπὶ πλείεσσιν ἀδυνατην, *in the uncertainty* (or obscurity) *of riches*; intimating, that to trust in them, is to trust in darkness it self; in that wherein we can discern nothing; in we know not what. They are, we cannot but observe, subject to an infinity of chances, many of them obvious and notorious; more of them secret and unaccomptable: *They make* (the Prov. 23. 5. *Wise-man* tells us) *themselves wings* (they need it seems no help for that) *and fly away like as an eagle toward heaven* (quite out of sight, and beyond our reach they of their own accord do swiftly fly away) however, should they be disposed to stay with us, we must fly from them;

Job 1. 21.

27. 19.

1 Tim. 6. 7.

Eccl. 5. 21.

Psal. 39. 6.

them; were they inseparably affixed to this life, yet must they together with that be severed from us; as we came naked of them into this World, so naked shall we return :

As he came, saith the Preacher, so shall he go; and what profit (then) hath he that laboureth for the wind ?

From hence, that we must so soon part with riches, he infers them to be but wind; a thing not any-wise to be fixed or settled; which 'tis vain to think we can appropriate, or retain; and vain therefore greedily to covet or pursue: So the *Psalmist* also reasons it: *Surely, every man (saith he) walketh in a vain shew; surely they are disquieted in vain; he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them.* Men, in his accompt, that troubled themselves in accumulating Wealth, did but idly delude themselves, fancying to receive content from such things, which they must themselves soon be separated from; and leave at uncertainties, to be disposed of they

know

know not how : That which in his wife Son's esteem was sufficient to make a man hate all his labour under the Sun : Because, saith he, I shall Eccl. 2. 18. leave it to the man that shall be after me, and who knoweth, whether he shall be a wise man or a fool ? yet he shall have rule over all my labour, wherein I have laboured, and wherein I have shewed my self wise under the Sun :

All, it seems, that we are so wise, and so industrious about ; that we so beat our heads about, and spend our spirits upon, is at most but *gaudium hæredis* ; the joy of an heir, and that an uncertain one (for your Son, your Kinsman, your Friend may for all you can know die before you, or soon after you) 'tis but a being at great pains and charges in tilling the Land, and sowing and dressing it ; whence we are sure not to reap any benefit to our selves, and cannot know who shall do it.

In his elaborant, quæ sciunt nihil omnino ad se pertinere ; serunt arbores, quæ alteri seculo profint. Cic. de Senect.

The

Jam. i. 11.

The rich man (St. James tells us)
as the flower of the grass shall he
pass away ; for the Sun is no sooner
risen with a burning heat, but it
withereth the grass, and the flower
thereof falleth, and the grace of the
fashion thereof perishe!h ; So also shall
the rich man fade in his ways ; all the
comfort (we see by the Apostles
discourse) and the convenience, all
the grace and ornament that riches
are supposed to yeild will certainly
wither and decay, either before,
or with us ; whenever the Sun
(that is, either some extream mis-
chance in life, or the certain desti-
ny of death) doth arise, and make
impression on them. But our Savi-
our hath best set out the nature and
condition of these things in that Pa-
rable concerning the man, who ha-
ving had a plentiful crop of Corn,
and having projected for the dispo-
sal of it, resolved then to bless him-
self, and entertain his mind with plea-
sing discourses, that having, in readi-
ness and security, so copious accom-
moda-

Luke 12. 20.

modations, he might now enjoy himself with full satisfaction and delight; not considering, that though his Barns were full, his Life was not sure; that God's Pleasure might soon interrupt his Pass-time; that the fearfull sentence might presently be pronounced: *Thou fool, this night thy life shall be required of thee, and what thou hast prepared, to whom shall it fall?* Euripides calls riches φιλόψυχον χεῖμα, a thing which much endears life; or makes men greatly love it; but they do not at all enable to keep it: There is no ἀντάλ- Τινι ᾧται.
λαγμα ἢ ψυχῆς, no price, or ransom equivalent to life; all that a man hath, he would give to redeem it, but it is a Purchase too dear for all the riches in the World to compass; so the Psalmist tells us, *They that trust* Psal. 49.
in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches, none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him; for the redemption of their soul is precious: They cannot re-
D deem

Luke 12. 20.

Prov. 11. 4.

Prov. 27. 24.

deem their Brother's soul, or life; nor therefore their own; for all souls are of the same value, all greatly surpass the price of gold and silver. Life was not given us for perpetuity, but lent, or deposited with us; And without delay or evasion it must be resigned into the hand of its just Owner, when he shall please to demand it; and although righteousness may, yet riches (as the *Wiseman* tells us) cannot deliver from death, nor at all profit us in the day of wrath. Could we probably retain our Possessions for ever in our hands; nay, could we certainly foresee some considerable long definite time, in which we might enjoy our stores, it were perhaps somewhat excusable to scrape and hoard, it might look like rational Providence, it might yield some valuable satisfaction; but since, *Rape, congere, aufer, posside, statim relinquendum est*; since, as *Solomon* tells us, *Riches are not for ever, nor doth the crown endure to every generation*;

yea,

yea, since they must be left very soon, nor is there any certainty of keeping them any time ; that one day may consume them ; one night may dispossess us of them, and our life together with them ; there can be no reason why we should be solicitous about them ; no accompt given of our setting so high a rate upon them. For who would much regard the having custody of a rich treasure for a day or two, then to be stripped of all, and left bare ? To be to day invested in large domains, and to morrow to be dispossess'd of them ? No Man surely would be so fond, as much to affect the condition. Yet this is our case ; whatever we call ours, we are but guardians thereof for a few days. *Sen. Ep. 98.* This consideration therefore may serve to repress, or moderate in us all covetous desires, proud conceits, vain confidences and satisfactions in respect to worldly Wealth, to induce us (in *Job's* language) *not to make gold our hope, nor to say to the* *Job 31. 24.*

D 2 fine

fine gold, thou art my confidence ; not to rejoyce because our wealth is great, and because our hand hath gotten much ; to extirpate from our hearts that root of all evil, the love of Money. For if, as the Preacher thought, the greatest pleasure or benefit accruing from them, is but looking upon them for a while,

Eccl. 5. 11. (what good, saith he, is there to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes ?) if a little will, nay must suffice our natural appetites, and our present necessities ; if more than needs, is but (as the Scripture teaches us) a trouble

Eccl. 5. 12. 1 Tim. 6. 9. disquieting our minds with care ; a dangerous snare, drawing us into mischief and sorrow ; if this, I say, be their present quality ; and were it better, yet could it last for any certain, or any long continuance, is it not evidently better to enjoy that pittance God hath allotted us with ease and contentation of mind ; or if we want a necessary supply, to employ onely a moderate diligence

in

*Simplici cura
constant neces-
saria, in deli-
cias laboratur.
Sen. Ep. 89.
Matth. 6.*

in getting thereof by the fairest means, which with God's blessing promised thereto, will never fail to procure a competence, and with this to rest content; than with those in *Amos*, to pant after the dust of the earth; to lade our selves with thick clay; to thirst insatiably after foulds of gold, to heap up mountains of treasure, to extend unmeasurably our possessions, (*joining house to house, and laying field to field, till there be no place, that we may be placed alone in the midst of the earth*; as the Prophet *Esay* doth excellently describe the covetous Man's humour) than, I say, thus incessantly to toil for the maintenance of this frail body, this flitting breath of ours? If Divine Bounty hath freely imparted a plentiful estate upon us, we should indeed bless God for it; *making our selves friends* there- by (as our Saviour advises us) employing it to God's Praise and Service; to the relief and comfort of our Brethren that need; but to seek

Heb. 13. 15.

Tim. 6. 8.

Psal. 55. 26.

Amos 2. 6.

Hab. 2. 6.

Isa. 5. 8.

Luke 16. 9.

it earnestly, to set our heart upon it, to relye thereon; to be greatly pleased or elevated in mind thereby, as it argues much infidelity and profaneness of heart, so it signifies much inconsiderateness and folly, the ignorance of its nature, the forgetfulness of our own condition, upon the grounds discoursed upon.

3. Now, in the next place; for Pleasure, that great Witch, which so enchants the World, and which by its mischievous Baits so allures Mankind into sin and misery; although this consideration be not altogether necessary to disparage it (its own nature sufficing to that; for it is more transitory than the shortest life, it dyes in the very enjoyment) yet it may conduce to our wise and good practice in respect thereto, by tempering the sweetness thereof, yea souring its relish to us; minding us of its insufficiency and unserviceableness to the felicity of a mortal creature; yea, its extreemly dangerous consequences to a soul, that
must

must survive the short enjoyment thereof. Some persons indeed, ignorant or incredulous of a future estate; presuming of no sense remaining after death, nor regarding any accompt to be rendred of this life's actions, have encouraged themselves, and others in the free enjoyment of present sensualities, upon the score of our life's shortness and uncertainty; inculcating such *Maxims* as these:

---*Brevis est hic fructus*

homullis ;

---*post mortem nulla voluptas.*

Lucr.

*Quem fors dierum cunque dabit,
Appone, nec dulces amores [lucro
Sperne puer, &c.*

Hor. l. 9.

1 Cor. 15. 32.

*Let us eat and drink,
for to morrow we shall*

dye; because our life is short, let us make the most advantageous use thereof we can; because death is uncertain, let us prevent its surprisal, and be beforehand with it, enjoying somewhat, before it snatches all from us. The Authour of *Wisdom* observeth, and thus represents these Mens discourse; *Our life is*

Sap. 2. 1, &c.

short and tedious ; and in the death of a man there is no remedy ; neither was there any man known to have returned from the grave : — Come on, therefore let us enjoy the good things that are present ; let us speedily use the creatures like as in youth ; let us fill our selves with costly wine and ointments ; and let no flower of the spring pass by us ; let us crown our selves with rose-buds before they be withered ; let none of us go without his part of voluptuousness---for this is our portion, and our lot is this. Thus, and no wonder , have some men conceiving themselves beasts, resolved to live as such ; renouncing all sober care becoming men , and drowning their reason in brutish sensualities ; yet no question, the very same reflexion , that this life would soon pass away , and that death might speedily attack them , did not a little quash their mirth , and damp their pleasure. To think, that this perhaps might be the last Banquet they should taste of ; that they

they should themselves shortly become the feast of Worms and Serpents ; could not but somewhat spoil the gust of their highest delicacies, and disturb the sport of their loudest jovialties ; but, in *Job's* expression, *make the meat in their bowels to turn, and be as the gall of Asps within them.* Those customary enjoyments did so enamour them of sensual delight, that they could not without pungent regret imagine a necessity of soon for ever parting with them ; and so their very Pleasure was by this thought made distastfull and embittered to them. So did the *Wiseman* observe : *O death, how bitter is the remembrance of thee to a man that liveth at rest in his possessions ; unto the man that hath nothing to vex him ; and that hath prosperity in all things ;* *Tea* (adds he) *unto him that is yet able to receive meat :* And how bitter then must the remembrance thereof be to him, who walloweth in all kind of corporal satisfaction and delight ; that placeth all

Job 20. 14.

Eccles 41. 1.

Ecclef. 7. 6.

Ecclef. 2. 2.

Prov. 23. 32.

Heb. 11. 35.

all his happiness in sensual enjoyment? However, as to us, who are better instructed and affected; who know and believe a future state; the consideration, that the time of enjoying these delights will soon be over; that this World's jollity is but like *the crackling of thorns under a pot* (which yields a brisk sound, and a chearfull blaze, but heats little, and instantly passes away) that they leave no good fruits behind them, but do onely corrupt and enervate our minds; war against, and hurt our souls; tempt us to sin, and involve us in guilt; that therefore *Solomon* was surely in the right, when he said of *laughter*, that *it is mad*, and of *mirth*, what doth it? (that is, that the highest of these delights are very irrational impertinences) and of intemperance; that, at the last, *it biteth like a Serpent, and stingeth like an Adder*; with us, I say, who reflect thus, that (*θεός-κτιστος ἀμαρτίας ἀπόλαυσις*) enjoyment of sinfull pleasure for a season cannot

cannot obtain much esteem and love ;
but will rather , I hope , be despi-
sed and abhorred by us. I will add
only

4. Concerning secular Wisdom
and Knowledge ; the
which Men do also
commonly with great
earnestness and ambi-
tion seek after, as the most specious
ornament, and pure content of their
mind ; this consideration doth also
detect the just value thereof ; so
as to allay intemperate ardour to-
ward it, pride and conceitedness up-
on the having, or seeming to have
it, envy and emulation about it.
For, imagine, if you please, a Man
accomplished with all varieties of
learning commendable , able to re-
compt all the stories that have been
ever written (or the deeds acted) since
the World's beginning ; to under-
stand, or with the most delightfull
fluency and elegancy to speak all the
languages that have at any time
been in use among the sons of men ;
skil-

Δοκῆ γὰρ ἡ σοφία θανμα-
στὰς ἡδονὰς ἔχειν καθαριότητι, καὶ
τῷ βελτίῳ. Arist. Eth. X 7.

skillfull in twisting and untwisting all kinds of subtilties ; versed in all sorts of natural experiments, and ready to assign plausible conjectures about the causes of them ; studied in all Books whatever, and in all Monuments of Antiquity ; deeply knowing in all the mysteries of art, or science, or policy, such as have ever been devised by humane wit, or study or observation ; yet all this, such is the pity, he must be forced presently to abandon ; all the use he could make of all his notions, the pleasure he might find in them, the reputation accruing to him from them must at that fatal minute vanish ; *his breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth, in that very day his thoughts perish. There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither he goeth.* 'Tis seen (saith the Psalmist, seen indeed every day, and observed by all) *that wise men dye, likewise the fool and brutish person perisheth ; one event happeneth to them both ; there*

Psal. 46. 4.
Eccl. 9. 10.

Psal. 49. 10.
Eccl. 2. 14, 15,
&c.

is no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool for ever ; (both dye alike, both alike are forgotten) as the wisest man himself, did (not without some distast) observe and complain. All our subtile conceits, and nice criticisms ; all our fine inventions and goodly speculations shall be swallowed up either in the utter darkness, or in the clearer light of the future state. One Portion of that *Lethæan* cup (which we must all take down upon our entrance into that *land of forgetfulness*) will probably drown the memory, deface the shape of all those *Ideas*, with which we have here stuffed our minds ; however they are not like to be of use to us in that new, so different, state ; where none of our languages are spoken ; none of our experience will suit ; where all things have quite another face unknown, unthought of by us. Where *Aristotle*

Pfal. 88. 12.

Τὴν δ' Ἰσοκράτης διαλέ-
βει ὀπισκωντῶν, γρηῶν φησι
παρ' αὐτῷ τὰς μαθητάς, ὡς
ἐν αὐτῷ χρησομένης τῆς τέχνης,
καὶ δίκας ἐρευνῆας. Cato Sen
apud Plut. pag. 641.

Stotle, and *Varro* shall appear mere Idiots; *Demosthenes* and *Cicero* shall become very infants; the wisest and eloquentest *Greeks* will prove senseless and dumb *Barbarians*; where all our Authours shall have no authority; where we must all go fresh to school again; must unlearn perhaps, what in these misty regions we thought our selves best to know; and begin to learn, what we not once ever dream'd of; Doth therefore, I pray you, so transitory and fruitless a good (for it self I mean and excepting our duty to God, or the reasonable diligence we are bound to use in our calling) deserve such anxious desire, or so restless toil; so carefull attention of mind, or assiduous pain of body about it? Doth it become us to contend, or emulate so much about it? Above all do we not most unreasonably, and against the nature of the thing it self we pretend to (that is, ignorantly and foolishly) if we are proud and conceited, much value

our

our selves or contemn others, in respect thereto? *Solomon* the most experienc'd in this matter, and best able to judge thereof (He that gave his heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that had been done under Heaven, and this with extream success; even he) passeth the same sentence of vanity, vexation and unprofitableness, upon this, as upon all other subcelestial things. True, he commends wisdom as an excellent and usefull thing comparatively; *exceeding folly, so far as light exceedeth darknes*; But since light it self is not permanent, but must give way to darkness, the difference soon vanished; and his opinion thereof abated; considering, that as it happened to the fool, so it happened to him, he breaks into that expostulation: *And why then was I more wise?* to what purpose was such a distinction made, that signified in effect so little? And indeed the Testimony of this great personage may serve for a good *Epilogue*

to

Διπλῆν ὁρᾶσιν
οἱ μαδόντες
γέγραπτα.
Eccl. 2. 15.

to all this discourse, discovering sufficiently the slender worth of all earthly things : Seeing he, that had given himself industriously to experiment the worth of all things here below, to sound the depth of their utmost perfection and use ; who had all the advantages imaginable of performing it : Who flourished in the greatest magnificences of worldly pomp and power ; who enjoyed an incredible affluence of all riches ; who tasted all varieties of most exquisite pleasure ; whose heart was (by God's special gift, and by his own industrious care) enlarged with all kind of knowledge (furnished with notions many as the

† Kings 4. 29.

sand upon the sea shore) above all that were before him ; who had possessed and enjoyed all that fancy could conceive, or heart could wish, and had arrived to the top of secular Happiness ; Yet even *He* with pathetic reiteration pronounces all to be *vanity and vexation of spirit* ; altogether unprofitable and unsatisfac-

ctory

ctory to the mind of Man. And so therefore we may justly conclude them to be; so finishing the first grand advantage this present consideration affordeth us in order to that wisdom, to which we should apply our hearts.

I should proceed to gather other good fruits, which it is apt to produce and contribute to the same purpose; but since my thoughts have taken so large scope upon that former head, so that I have already too much, I fear, exercised your patience, I shall onely mention the rest. As this consideration doth, as we have seen, First, dispose us rightly to value these temporal goods, and moderate our affections about them; so it doth, Secondly, in like manner, conduce to the right estimation of temporal evils; and thereby to the well tempering our passions, in the resentment of them; to the begetting of patience and contentedness in our minds. Also, Thirdly, it may

E help

help us to value, and excite us to regard those things (good or evil) which relate to our future state; being the things onely of a permanent nature, and of an everlasting consequence to us. Fourthly, It will engage us to husband carefully and well employ this short time of our present life: Not to defer or procrastinate our endeavours to live well; not to be lazy and loitering in the dispatch of our onely considerable business, relating to eternity; to embrace all opportunities, and improve all means; and follow the best *compendiums* of good practice leading to eternal bliss. Fifthly, It will be apt to confer much toward the begetting and preserving sincerity in our thoughts, words and actions; causing us to decline all oblique designs upon present mean interests, or base regards to the opinions or affections of men: bearing single respects to our conscience and duty in our actions; Teaching us to speak as we mean; and be what

we

we would seem ; to be in our hearts and in our closets, what we appear in our outward expressions and conversations with Men ; For considering, that within a very short time all the thoughts of our hearts shall be disclosed ; and all the actions of our lives exposed to publick view (being strictly to be examined at the great bar of divine judgment before Angels and Men) we cannot but perceive it to be the greatest folly in the World, for this short present time to disguise our selves ; to conceal our intentions, or smother our actions. What hath occurred (upon these important subjects) to my meditation, I must at present, in regard to your patience, omit. I shall close all with that good *Collect* of our Church.

Almighty God, give us grace, that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light now in the time of this mortal life, in which thy Son Jesus Christ

*came to visit us in great humility ;
that in the last day, when he shall
come again in his glorious Majesty to
judge both the quick and the dead,
we may rise to the life immortal,
through him, who liveth and reigneth
with thee, and the Holy Ghost ; now
and ever. Amen.*

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SERMON II.

The Consideration of
our latter End.

P S A L M XC. 12.

*So teach us to number our days,
that we may apply our hearts
unto wisdom.*

IN discoursing formerly upon Job 14. 14.
these words (expounded accord- All the days of
my appointed
time will I
wait, till my
change come.
ing to the most common and passa-
ble interpretation) that which I
chiefly observed was this: That
the serious consideration of the short-
ness and frailty of our life is a fit
mean or rational instrument subser-
vient to the bringing our hearts to

wisedom; that is, to the making us discern, attend unto, embrace and prosecute such things as, according to the dictates of right reason, are truly best for us.

I. The truth of which observation I largely declared from hence, that the said consideration disposeth us to judge rightly about those goods (which ordinarily court and tempt us, *viz.* worldly glory and honour; riches, pleasure, knowledge; to which I might have added wit, strength and beauty) what their just worth and value is; and consequently to moderate our affections, our cares, our endeavours about them; for that if all those goods be uncertain and transitory, there can be no great reason to prize them much, or to affect them vehemently, or to spend much care and pain about them.

II. I shall next in the same scales weigh our temporal evils; and say, that

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that also, The consideration of our lives brevity and frailty doth avail to the passing a true judgment of, and consequently to the governing our passions, and ordering our behaviour in respect to all those temporal evils, which either according to the Law of our nature, or the fortuitous course of things, or the particular dispensation of providence do befall us. Upon the declaration of which point I need not insist much, since what was before discoursed concerning the opposite goods doth plainly enough infer it; more immediately indeed in regard to the *mala damni*, or *privationis*, (the evils, which consist onely in the want, or loss of temporal goods) but sufficiently also by a manifest parity of reason in respect to the *mala sensus*, the real pains, crosses and inconveniences, that assail us in this life. For if worldly glory do hence appear to be no more than a transient blaze, a fading shew, a hollow sound, a piece of theatrical pagean-

try, the want thereof cannot be very considerable to us. Obscurity of condition (living in a valley beneath that dangerous height, and deceitfull lustre) cannot in reason be deemed a very sad or pitifull thing; which should displease, or discompose us; if we may thence learn that abundant wealth is rather a needless clog, or a perillous snare, than any great convenience to us; we cannot well esteem to be poor a great infelicity, or to undergo losses a grievous calamity; but rather a benefit to be free from the distractions that attend it; to have little to keep for others, little to care for our selves. If these present pleasures be discerned hence to be onely wild fugitive dreams; out of which being soon roused we shall onely find bitter regrets to abide; why should not the wanting opportunities of enjoying them be rather accompted a happy advantage, than any part of misery to us? If it seem, that the greatest perfection of curious knowledge (of
what

what use or ornament soever) after it is hardly purchased, must soon be parted with ; to be simple or ignorant will be no great matter of lamentation ; as those will appear no solid goods , so these consequently must be onely *umbræ malorum*, phantasms, Sen. Ep. 89. or shadows of evil, rather than truly or substantially so ; (evils created by fancy and subsisting thereby ; which reason should, and time will surely remove.) That in being impatient or disconsolate for them, we are but like children, that fret and wail for the want of petty toys. And for the more real or positive evils, such as violently assault nature, whose impressions no reason can so withstand, as to distinguish all distast or afflictive sense of them ; yet this consideration will aid to abate and assuage them ; affording a certain hope and prospect of approaching redress. It is often seen at Sea, that Men (from unacquaintance with such agitations, or from brackish steams arising from the salt Water) are heartily

heartily sick, and discover themselves to be so by apparently grievous symptoms; yet no man hardly there doth mind or pity them, because the malady is not supposed dangerous, and within a while will probably of it self pass over; or that however, the remedy is not far off; the sight of Land, a taste of the fresh Air will relieve them: 'Tis near our Case: We passing over this troublesome Sea of life: from unexperience, joined with the tenderness of our constitution, we cannot well endure the changes and crosses of fortune; to be tossed up and down; to suck in the sharp vapours of penury, disgrace, sickness, and the like, doth beget a qualm in our stomachs; make us nauseate all things, and appear sorely distempered; yet is not our condition so dismal, as it seems; we may grow hardier, and wear out our sense of affliction; however, the Land is not far off, and by disembarking hence, we shall suddenly be discharged of all

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'Tis a common solace of grief, approved by wise men, *si gravis, brevis est ; si longus, levis ;* if it be very grievous and acute, it cannot continue long, without intermission or respite ; if it abide long, it is supportable ; intolerable pain is like lightening, it destroys us, or is it self instantly destroy-

ed. However, death at length (which never is far off) will free us ; be we never so much tossed with storms of misfortune, that is a sure haven ; be we persecuted with never so many enemies, that is a safe refuge ; let what pains or diseases soever infest us, that is an assured *Anodynon*, and infallible remedy for them all ; however we be wearied with the labours of the day, the night will come and ease us ; the grave will become a bed of rest unto

us.

Θάψεται πύνα γδ ἀκρον ἐκ
ἐχέει χέρονον.

Τὸ μὲν ἀφόρητον ἔξάγει·
τὸ δὲ χερνίζον φορητόν. Ant.
VII. Sect. 33.

Summi doloris intentio invenit finem : nemo potest valde dolere, & diu : sic nos amantissima nostri natura disposuit, ut dolorem aut tolerabilem, aut brevem faceret. Sen. Ep. 24.

Dolore percussi mortem imploramus, eamque unam, ut miserriarum malorumque terminum, exceptamus. Cic. cons.

Moriar ? hoc dicis ; desinam agrotare posse, &c. Sen.

us. Shall I dye? I shall then cease to be sick; I shall be exempted from disgrace; I shall be enlarged from prison; I shall be no more pinched with want; no more tormented with pain. Death is a Winter, that as it withers the Rose and Lily, so it kills the Nettle and Thistle; as it stifles all worldly joy and pleasure, so it suppresses all care and grief; as it hushes the voice of mirth and melody, so it stills the clamours, and the sighs of misery; as it defaces all the World's glory, so it covers all disgrace, wipes off all tears, silences all complaint, buries all disquiet and discontent. King *Philip* of *Macedon* once threatned the *Spartans* to vex them sorely, and bring them into great straits; but, answered they, *can he hinder us from dying*; that indeed is a way of evading, which no enemy can obstruct, no Tyrant can debar Men from; they who can deprive of life, and its conveniences, cannot take away death from them. There is a place,

Ἄδλω ἔχων
βονδὸν, & τρέ-
μω σπιάς.

Eripere vitam
nemo non homi-
ni potest; At
nemo mortem.
Sen. Trag.

Job

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Job tells us, where the wicked cease Job 3. 17.
 from troubling, and where the weary
 be at rest; where the prisoners rest to-
 gether; they hear not the voice of the
 oppressour; the small and great are
 there; and the servant is free from
 his Master. 'Tis therefore but hold-
 ing out a while, and a deliverance
 from the worst this World can mo-
 lest us with, shall of its own accord
 arrive unto us; in the mean time 'tis
 better that we at present owe the be-
 nefit of our comfort to reason, than
 afterward to time; by rational con-
 sideration to work patience and con-
 tentment in our selves; and to use
 the shortness of our life as an argu-
 ment to sustain us in our affliction,
 than to find the end thereof onely a
 natural and necessary means of our
 rescue from it. The contemplation
 of this cannot fail to yield some-
 thing of courage and solace to us in
 the greatest pressures; these tran-
 sient, and short-liv'd evils, if we con-
 sider them as so, cannot appear such
 horrid bugbears, as much to affright

or

Ὁ μάλιστα τῶν
 χειρότερον χαί-
 ζονται, τὸ το
 χαίροντες τῶν
 λόγων. Plut. ad
 Apol. p. 195.

*Omnia breviter
 tolerabilia esse
 debent, etiam si
 magna. Cic.
 Læl. ad fin.*

us. Shall I dye? I shall then cease to be sick; I shall be exempted from disgrace; I shall be enlarged from prison; I shall be no more pinched with want; no more tormented with pain. Death is a Winter, that as it withers the Rose and Lily, so it kills the Nettle and Thistle; as it stifles all worldly joy and pleasure, so it suppresses all care and grief; as it hushes the voice of mirth and melody, so it stills the clamours, and the sighs of misery; as it defaces all the World's glory, so it covers all disgrace, wipes off all tears, silences all complaint, buries all disquiet and discontent. King *Philip* of *Macedon* once threatned the *Spartans* to vex them sorely, and bring them into great straits; but, answered they, *can he hinder us from dying*; that indeed is a way of evading, which no enemy can obstruct, no Tyrant can debar Men from; they who can deprive of life, and its conveniences, cannot take away death from them. There is a place,

**Ad'lw ἔχον
βονδόν, & τρέ-
μω σκιάς.
Eripere vitam
nemo non homi-
ni potest; At
nemo mortem.
Sen. Trag.*

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Job tells us, where the wicked cease Job 3. 17.

from troubling, and where the weary
be at rest; where the prisoners rest to-
gether; they hear not the voice of the
oppressour; the small and great are
there; and the servant is free from
his Master. 'Tis therefore but hold-
ing out a while, and a deliverance
from the worst this World can mo-
lest us with, shall of its own accord
arrive unto us; in the mean time 'tis
better that we at present owe the be-
nefit of our comfort to reason, than
afterward to time; by rational con-
sideration to work patience and con-
tentment in our selves; and to use
the shortness of our life as an argu-
ment to sustain us in our affliction,
than to find the end thereof onely a
natural and necessary means of our
rescue from it. The contemplation
of this cannot fail to yield some-
thing of courage and solace to us in
the greatest pressures; these tran-
sient, and short-liv'd evils, if we con-
sider them as so, cannot appear such
horrid bugbears, as much to affright

Ὁ μάλιστα τῶν
χείρω χεῖ-
ροισι, τὸ το
χεῖροισι τῶν
λόγων. Plut. ad
Apol. p. 195.

*Omnia breviter
tolerabilia esse
debent, etiam si
magna. Cic.
Lael. ad fin.*

or

or dismay us ; if we remember how short they are, we cannot esteem them so great, or so intolerable. There be, I must confess, divers more noble considerations, proper and available to cure discontent and impatience. The considering, that all these evils proceed from God's just will, and wise providence ; unto which it is fit, and we upon all accompts are obliged readily to submit ; that they do ordinarily come from God's goodness, and gracious design towards us ; that they are medicines (although ungratefull, yet wholsome) administred by the Divine Wisdom, to prevent, remove or abate our distempers of soul (to allay the tumours of pride, to cool the fevers of intemperate desire ; to rouse us from the lethargy of sloath ; to stop the gangrene of bad conscience) that they are fatherly corrections, intended to reclaim us from sin, and excite us to duty ; that they serve as instruments or occasions to exercise, to try, to refine our vertue ;

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to beget in us the hope, to qualifie us for the reception of better rewards; such discourses indeed are of a better nature, and have a more excellent kind of efficacy: yet no fit help, no good art, no just weapon is to be quite neglected in the combat against our spiritual foes. A Pebble-stone hath been sometimes found more convenient than a Sword or a Spear to slay a Giant. Baser remedies (by reason of the Patient's constitution, or circumstances) do sometime produce good effect, when others in their own nature more rich and potent want efficacy. And surely frequent reflexions upon our mortality, and living under the sense of our life's frailty cannot but conduce somewhat to the begetting in us an indifferency of mind toward all these temporal occurents; to extenuate both the goods and the evils we here meet with; consequently therefore to compose and calm our passions about them.

III. But

III. But I proceed to another use of that consideration we speak of emergent from the former ; but so as to improve it to higher purposes. For since it is usefull to the diminishing our admiration of these worldly things, to the withdrawing our affections from them , to the slackning our endeavours about them ; it will follow that it must conduce also to beget an esteem , a desire, a prosecution of things conducing to our future welfare ; both by removing the obstacles of doing so , and by engaging us to consider the importance of those things in comparison with these. By removing obstacles I say ; for while our hearts are possessed with regard and passion toward these present things , there can be no room left in them for respect and affection toward things future. 'Tis in our soul as in the rest of nature ; there can be no penetration of objects (as it were) in our hearts, nor any vacuity in them ;

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our mind no more than our body can be in several places, or tend several ways, or abide in perfect rest; yet some-where it will always be; some-whither it will always go; some-what it will ever be doing. If we *have a treasure* here (some-what Matth. 6. 21. we greatly like and much confide in) *our hearts will be here* with it; and if here, they cannot be other-where; they will be taken up; they will rest satisfied; they will not care to seek farther. If we affect worldly glory and delight in the applause of men, we shall not be so carefull to please God, and seek his favour. If we admire and repose confidence in riches, it will make us neglectfull of God, and distrustfull of his Providence; if our mind thirsts after, and sucks in greedily sensual pleasures, we shall not relish spiritual delights, attending the practice of vertue and piety, or arising from good conscience; adhering to, attending upon Masters of so different, so opposite a quality

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is inconsistent; they cannot abide peaceably together, they cannot both rule in our narrow breasts; we shall love and hold to the one; ^{1 John 2. 15.} hate and despise the other. *If any man love the World, the love of the Father is not in him;* the love of the World, as the present guest, so occupies and fills the room; that it will not admit, cannot hold the love of God. But when the heart is discharged and emptied of these things; when we begin to despise them as base and vain; to distast them as insipid and unsavoury; then naturally will succeed a desire after other things promising a more solid content; and desire will breed endeavour; and endeavour (furthered by God's assistance always ready to back it) will yeild such a glimpse and taste of those things, as will so comfort and satisfie our minds, that thereby they will be drawn and engaged into a more earnest prosecution of them. When (I say) driving on ambitious Projects, heap-

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ing up Wealth, providing for the flesh (by our reflecting on the shortness and frailty of our life) become so insipid to us, that we find little appetite to them, or relish in them; our restless minds will begin to hunger and thirst after righteousness, desiring some satisfaction thence: Discerning these secular and carnal fruitions to be mere *bushes* (the Luke 22. 5. proper food of swine) we shall bethink our selves of that better nourishment (of rational or spiritual comfort) which our Fathers house doth afford to his children and servants. Being somewhat disentangled from the care of our farms and our trafficks; from yoking our oxen and being married to our present delights; we may be at leisure, and in disposition to comply with divine invitations to entertainments spiritual. Experiencing, that our Matth. 22. 5. trade about these petty commodities turns to small accompt, and that in the end we shall be nothing richer thereby; reason will induce us

with the Merchant in the Gospel to
 Matth. 13. 46. *sell all that we have* (to forego our
 present interests and designs) for
 the purchasing that *rich Pearl* of
 God's Kingdom, which will yeild
 so exceeding profit; the gain of
 present comfort to our conscience,
 and eternal happiness to our souls.
 In fine, when we consider seriously,
 Heb. 13. 14. that *we have here no abiding City,*
 1 Pet. 2. 11. but are onely *sojourners and pilgrims*
upon Earth; that all our care and pain
 here do regard onely an uncertain
 and transitory state; and will there-
 fore suddenly as to all fruit and be-
 nefit be lost unto us; this will sug-
 gest unto us, with the good Patri-
 archs, *negleſſing theſe things, they purſue that which is before us,*
 Heb. 11. 16. *to long after a better Countrey*; a
 more assured, and lasting state of
 life; where we may enjoy some cer-
 tain and durable repose; to tend
 homeward, in our desires and hopes,
 toward those eternal Mansions of joy
 and rest prepared for God's faithfull
 Servants in Heaven. Thus will this
 consideration help toward the bring-
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ing us to inquire after and regard the things concerning our future state ; and in the result will engage us to compare them with these present things, as to our concernment in them and the consequence of them to our advantage or damage, whence a right judgment, and a congruous practice will naturally follow. There be four ways of comparing the things relating to this present life with those which respect our future state : Comparing the goods of this with the goods of that ; the evils of this with the evils of that ; the goods of this with the evils of that ; the evils of this with the goods of that. All these comparisons we may find often made in Scripture ; in order to the informing our judgment about the respective value of both sorts ; the present consideration intervening, as a standard to measure and try them by.

First then ; comparing the present goods with those which concern our future state, since the tran-

sitoriness and uncertainty of temporal goods detract from their worth, and render them in great degree contemptible; but the durability and certainty of spiritual goods doth encrease their rate, and make them exceedingly valuable; 'tis evident hence, that spiritual goods are infinitely to be preferred in our opinion, to be more willingly embraced, to be more zealously pursued than temporal goods, that in case of competition, when both cannot be enjoyed, we are in reason obliged readily to part with all these, rather than to forfeit our title unto, or hazard our hope of those. Thus in the Scripture it is often discoursed:

¶ John. 2. 17.

The world (saith St. John) passeth away, and the desire thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever: The World, and all that is desirable therein is transient; but obedience to God's commandments is of an everlasting consequence, whence he infers, that we should not love the world; that is, not entertain

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certain such an affection thereto, as may any way prejudice the love of God, or hinder the obedience springing thence, or suitable thereto.

All flesh is grass (saith St. Peter) ^{1 Pet. 1. 24.}
and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass; the grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away; but the word of the Lord endureth for ever: All worldly glory is frail and fading, but the Word of God is eternally firm and permanent; that is, the good things by God promised to them, who faithfully serve him, shall infallibly be conferred on them to their everlasting benefit; whence it follows, that as he exhorts, we are bound to gird up the loins of our mind, to be sober, and hope to the end; to proceed and persist constantly in faithfull obedience to God. *Charge those* (saith St. Paul) ^{1 Tim. 6. 19.}
who are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God; that they do good, be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to

v. 13.

*communicate ; treasuring up for themselves a good foundation for the future ; that they may attain everlasting life : Since, argues he, present riches are of uncertain, and short continuance ; but faith and obedience to God, exercised in our charity and mercy toward men, are a certain stock improveable to our eternal interest ; therefore be not proud of, nor relie upon those, but regard especially, and employ our selves upon these. Our Saviour himself doth often insist upon, and inculcate this comparison : *Treasure not unto your selves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust do corrupt ; and where thieves break through and steal ; but treasure up to your selves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal. Do not take care for your soul, what ye shall eat, and what ye shall drink ; nor for your body, what ye shall put on ; but seek first the kingdom of God. Labour not for the food that perisheth, but for the food**

Matth. 6. 20.

v. 25.

John 6. 27.

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food that abideth to eternal life ; sell Luke 12. 33.
 your substance, and give alms ; pro- Θησαυρὸν ἀ-
 vide your selves bags that wax not νέκλεται.
 old ; an indefectible treasure in the
 heavens : Thus doth the holy Scrip-
 ture, setting forth the uncertainty
 and transitoriness of the present, the
 certainty and permanency of fu-
 ture goods, declare the excellency
 of these above those ; advising there-
 upon, with highest reason, that we
 willingly reject those (in real effect,
 if need be, however always in rea-
 dy disposition of mind) in order to
 the procuring or securing of these.
 It also, for our example and encou-
 ragement, commends to us the wise-
 dom and vertue of those Persons,
 who have effectually practised this
 duty : of *Abraham, our Father*, who, Heb. 11. 10.
 in expectation of that well-founded
 City, made and built by God, did
 readily desert his Countrey and Kin-
 dred, with all present accommoda-
 tions of life ; of *Moses*, who disre-
 garded the splendors and delights of
 a great Court ; rejected the alliance
 of

v. 23.

Matth. 19. 27.
Luke 18. 28.

Luke 10. 39.

Phil. 3. 7, 8.

of a great Princess, and *refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter*; in respect to the *μειζωτερον*, that future distribution of reward; a share wherein shall assuredly fall to them, who above all other considerations regard the performance of their duty to God, of the *Apostles*, who *forsook all*, Parents, Brethren, Lands, Houses, Trades, receipts of Custome, to follow *Christ*; him at present poor, and naked of all secular honour, power, wealth and delight; in hope onely to receive from him divine benefits, and future preferments in his Kingdom; of *Mary*, who neglecting present affairs, and seating her self at *Jesus* his feet, attending to his discipline; is commended for her wisdom, in minding the *onely necessary thing*; in chusing the *better part, which could never be taken from her*: of *St. Paul*, who *accounted all his gains* (all his worldly interests and priviledges) *to be damage, to be dung in respect to Christ, and the excellent knowledge of him,*

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him, with the benefits thence accruing to him. On the contrary there we have *Esau* condemned and stigmatized for a *profane* and a vain person, who (*ἀνὴρ μὲν ἐσθίου*) *for* Heb. 12. 16. *one little eating-bout*; one mels of Pottage (for a little present satisfaction of sense, or for the sustenance of this frail life) did withgo his birthright, that embleme of spiritual blessings and priviledges. We Mark 10. 18. have again represented to us that unhappy young *Gentleman*; who, though he had good qualities, rendering him amiable even to our Saviour; and had been trained up in the observance of God's Commandments; yet not being content to part with his large Possessions, in lieu of the treasure by *Christ* offered in Heaven, was reputed deficient; could find no acceptance with God, nor admission into his Kingdom; for a petty temporal commodity forfeiting an infinite eternal advantage. For, saith our Saviour, *He that loveth father or mother a-* Matth. 10. 37. *bove*

- Luke 14. 26. *love me ; he that doth not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yea his own life (for me and the Gospel) is not worthy of me, nor can be my disciple.* He that in his esteem or affection doth prefer any temporal advantages before the benefits tendered by our Saviour (yea doth not in comparison despise, renounce and reject his dearest contents of life, and the very capacity of enjoying them, his life it self) doth not deserve to be reckoned among the Disciples of *Christ* ; to be so much as a Pretender to eternal joy, or a candidate of immortality. Our *Saviour* rejects all such unwise and perverse traders, who will not exchange brittle glass for solid gold ; counterfeit glistering stones for genuine most pretious jewels ; a garland of fading flowers for an incorruptible Crown of Glory ; a small temporary pension for a vastly rich freehold ; *an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in the* hea-
- 1 Pet. 1. 4.

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heavens. Thus doth the Holy Scripture teach us to compare these sorts of good things ;

And, secondly, so also doth it to compare the evils of both states ; for that seeing, as the soon ceasing of temporal mischiefs should (in reasonable proceeding) diminish the fear of them, and mitigate the grief for them ; so the incessant continuance of spiritual evils doth (according to just estimation) render them hugely grievous and formidable ; 'tis plain, that we should much more dislike, abominate, and shun spiritual evils, than temporal ; that we should make no question rather to endure these paroxysms of momentary pain, than incur those chronical and (indeed) incurable maladies ; that we should run willingly into these shallow plashes of present inconvenience, rather than plunge our selves into those unfathomable depths of eternal misery. There is (I suppose) no man, who would not accompt it a very great calamity

Matth. 5. 29.
18. 8.

ty (such as hardly greater could befall him here) to have *his right eye plucked out*, and *his right hand cut off*, and *his foot* taken from him; to be deformed and maimed, so that he can do nothing, or stir any whither; yet our Lord represents these to us as inconsiderable evils, yea as things very eligible and advantageous in comparison of those mischiefs, which the voluntary not embracing them, in case we cannot otherwise than by so doing avoid sin, will bring on us: συμπεριεῖ σοι, it is (saith he) profitable for thee, that one of thy members be lost, rather than that thy whole body be cast into hell; καλὸν σοι ἔστι, 'tis good, 'tis excellent for thee to enter into life lame and maimed, and one ey'd, rather than having two hands, and two feet, and two eyes (in all integrity and beauty of this temporal, or corporal state) to be cast into eternal fire. To be banished from ones native soil, secluded from all comforts of friendly acquaintance, devested irrecoverably

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of great estate and dignity ; becoming a vagrant and a servant in vile employment, in a strange Countrey, every Man would be apt to deem a wretched condition ; yet *Moses*, we Heb. 11. 25. see, freely chose it, rather than by enjoying unlawfull pleasures at home, in *Pharaoh's Court*, to incur God's displeasure and vengeance : συγκατα-
χέειν μάλλον ἐλάν, choosing rather
to undergo evil together with God's
people, than to have περιστρεφέν ἀ-
μαρτίας ἀπόλαυσιν, a temporary frui-
tion of sinfull delight, dangerous to
 the welfare of his soul. Death is commonly esteemed the most ex-
 tremem and terrible of evils incident to man ; yet our *Saviour* bids us not to regard or fear it, in comparison of that deadly ruine, which we adventure on by offending God :
I say unto you my friends (saith he, Luke 12. 4.
 he intended it for the most friendly Matth. 10. 28.
 advice) *be not afraid of them that* Ἀποκτείναι
kill the body, and after that have no- δύνανται,
thing farther to do ; but I will shew ἑλπίσαι δ' ἔ.
you whom ye shall fear ; Fear him, who
after

after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell ; to cast both body and soul into Hell, and destroy them therein ; Yea, I say unto you (so he inculcates and impresses it upon them) fear him.

But thirdly ; Considering the good things of this life together with the evils of that, which is to come ; Since enjoying these goods in comparison with enduring those evils is but rejoicing for a moment in respect of mourning to eternity ; if upon the seeming sweetness of these enjoyments to our carnal appetite be consequent a remediless distemp'ring of our soul ; so that what tastes like honey proves gall in the digestion ; gripes our bowels, gnaws our heart, and stings our conscience for ever ; if present mirth and jollity have a tendency to that dreadfull weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth threatened in the Gospel ; if for the praise and favour of a few giddy men here we venture eternal shame and confusion before God
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and Angels and all good men hereafter ; if for attaining or preserving a small stock of uncertain riches in this World we shall reduce our selves into a state of most uncomfortable nakedness and penury in the other. 'Tis clear as the Sun that we are downright fools and mad-men, if we do not upon these accompts rather willingly reject all these good things, than hazard incurring any of those evils ; for, saith truth it self,

What will it profit a man, if he gain the whole World (*ἢ ζήσῃ τὴν ὅλην κόσμον*) *and be endamaged as to his soul, or lose his soul as a muiet.*

Mark 8. 36
Luke 9. 25

'Tis a very disadvantageous bargain for all the conveniences this World can afford to be deprived of the comforts of our immortal state.

But,

Lastly, comparing the evils of this life with the benefits of the future, since the worst tempests of this life will be soon blown over, the bitterest crosses must expire (if not before, however) with our breath ;

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1 Pet. i. 4.

Ibid.

* Ἀλλοιωθεὶς
ὀλίγον ἄρα.* Πειρασμοῖς
James i. 2.

Rom. 5. 8.

but the good things of the future
state are immutable and perpetual;
'tis in evident consequence most rea-
sonable; that we freely (if need
be) undertake, and patiently en-
dure these for the sake of those ; that
in hope of that *incorruptible inheri-
tance, laid up for us in Heaven*, we
not only support and comfort our-
selves, but even rejoice and exult in
all the afflictions by God's wise and
just dispensation imposed on us here
as they in *St. Peter* ; wherein (saith
he) *ye greatly rejoice (or exult,*
being for a little while as in heaven
*through manifold * afflictions or trials*
Accompting it all joy (saith *St. James*
when ye fall into divers temptations
(that is afflictions or trials) *know-*
ing that the trial of your faith per-
fecteth patience ; that is, seeing the
sufferance of these present evils con-
duceth to the furtherance of your
spiritual and eternal welfare. And
We glory in tribulation, saith *St. Paul*
rendering the same accompt, be-
cause it tended to their souls and

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vantage: *St. Paul*, than whom no man perhaps ever more deeply tasted of the cup of affliction; and that tempered with all the most bitter ingredients which this World can produce; Whose life was spent in continual agitation and unsettledness; in all hardships of travel and labour and care; in extreme sufferance of all pains both of body and mind; in all imaginable dangers and difficulties and distresses, that nature exposes man unto, or humane malice can bring upon him; in all wants of natural comfort (food, sleep, shelter, liberty, health) in all kinds of disgrace and contumely; as you may see in those large inventories of his sufferings, registred by himself, in the 6th and 11th Chapters of his 2^d *Epistle* to the *Corinthians*; Yet all this considering the good things he expected afterward to enjoy, he accompted very slight and tolerable: For (saith he) our lightness of affliction, that is for a little while here, worketh for us

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2 Cor. 11. 23.
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2 Cor. 4. 17.
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Τὸ γὰρ παροῦ-
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Rom. 8. 18.

Heb. 10. 34.
Θεαταιζόμενοι.

* Ἀεταγῶν.

a far more exceeding weight of glory ; while we look not at the things which are seen ; but at those, which are not seen ; for the things which are seen are temporal ; but the things which are not seen are eternal. For we know, that when our earthly house of this tabernacle (of this unsteady transitory abode) is dissolved we are to have a tabernacle from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens. I reckon, saith he again, (that is having made a due comparison and computation I find) that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy (that is are not considerable, come under no rate or proportion) in respect of the glory which shall be revealed (or openly conferred) upon us. The like opinion had those faithfull Christians, in the *Epistle to the Hebrews*, of whom 'tis said, that *being exposed to publick scorn as in a theatre, with reproaches and afflictions, they did with gladness accept the spoiling* * (or rapine) of their goods ; knowing that they

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they had in Heaven a better and more induring substance. But the principal example (most obliging our imitation) of this wise choice is that of our Lord himself; who, in contemplation of the future great satisfaction and reward of patient submission to the divine will, did willingly undergo the greatest of temporal sorrows and ignominies; Who (saith the Apostle to the Hebrews, propounding his example to us) for the joy that was set before him endured the Cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of God. Heb. 12. 2.

Thus immediately, or by an easy inference doth the consideration of this lifes shortness and uncertainty confer to that main part of wisdom, rightly to value the things about which we are conversant; disposing us consequently to moderate our affections, and rightly to guide our actions about them; fitting us therefore for the performance of those duties so often en-

joined us ; of not caring for, not trusting in, not minding (unduly that is, and immoderately) things below ; of dying to this World and taking up our cross, or contentedly suffering (in submission to God's will) all loss and inconvenience ; as also to the placing our meditation and care ; our love and desire ; our hope and confidence ; our joy and satisfaction ; our most earnest pains and endeavours upon things divine, spiritual and eternal.

IV. I proceed to another general benefit of that general consideration ; which is that it may engage us to a good improvement of our time ; the doing which is a very considerable piece of wisdom. For if time be, (as *Theophrastus* called it truly) *a thing of most pretious value* (or expence) as it were a great folly to lavish it away unprofitably ; so to be frugal thereof, and carefull to lay it out for the best advantage, especially every Man having

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ving so little store thereof, must be a special point of Prudence. *To be covetous of time* (Seneca tells us) *is a commendable avarice*; it being necessary for the accomplishment of any worthy enterprize; there being nothing excellent, that can soon or easily be effected. Surely he that hath much and great business to dispatch; and but a little time allowed for it, is concerned to husband it well; not to lose it wholly in idleness; not to trifle it away in unnecessary diversions; not to put himself upon other impertinent affairs; above all not to create obstacles to himself, by pursuing matters of a tendency quite contrary to the success of his main undertakings. 'Tis our case; we are obliged here to negotiate in business of infinite price and consequence to us; no less than the salvation of our souls and eternal happiness; and we see, that our time to drive it on and bring it to a happy issue is very scant and short; short in it self; and very short

Nulla nisi temporis honesta est avaritia. Sen.

*Non enim dat
natura virtu-
tem ; ars est bo-
num fieri. Sen.
Ep. 89.*

in respect to the nature of those affairs ; the great variety, and the great difficulty of them : The great father of *Physicians* did quicken the students of that faculty to diligence, by admonishing them (in the first place, setting it in the front of his famous *Aphorisms*) that, *life is short, and art is long.* And how much more so is the art of living well (that most excellent and most necessary art ; for indeed vertue is not a gift of nature, but a work of art ; an effect of labour and study) this, I say most needfull and usefull art of living vertuously and piously ; this art of spiritual Physick ; (of preserving and recovering our souls health) how much longer is it ? how many rules are to be learnt ? how many precepts to be observed in order thereto ? We are bound to furnish our minds with needfull knowledge of God's will and our duty ; we are to bend our unwilling Wills to a ready compliance with them ; we are to adorn our souls with dispositions suitable to the future

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ture state (such as may qualifie us for the presence of God, and conversation with the blessed spirits above) it is incumbent on us to mortify corrupt desires, to restrain inordinate passions, to subdue natural propensities, to extirpate vicious habits; in order to the effecting these things, to use all fit means; devotion toward God, study of his Law, reflexion upon our actions, with all such spiritual instruments; the performing which duties, as it doth require great care and pains, so it needs much time; all this is not *dictum factum*, as soon done as said; a few spare minutes will not suffice to accomplish it. Natural inclination, that wild beast within us, will not so presently be tamed, and made tractable by us. Ill habits cannot be removed without much exercise and attendance; as they were begot, so they must be destroyed, by a constant succession, and frequency of acts. Fleshly lust is not to be killed with a stab or two; it will

Τί φθαίρει ἔ-
δος; ἐναντίον
ἔδος. Epict.

Rom. 2. 7.

will fight stoutly, and rebell often, and hold out long before with our utmost endeavour we can obtain an entire victory over it. No vertue is acquired in an instant, but by degrees, step by step; from the seeds of right instruction and good resolution it springs up, and grows forward by a continual progress of customary practice; 'tis a child of patience, a fruit of perseverance (that *τοιοῦτον ἐργασάζει*, *enduring in doing well*, St. Paul speaks of) and consequently a work of time, for enduring implies a good space of time. Having therefore so much to doe, and of so great concernment, and so little a portion of time for it, it behoves us to be carefull in the improvement of what time is allowed us; to embrace all opportunities and advantages offered; to go the nearest way, to use the best *compendiums* in the transaction of our business; not to be slothfull and negligent, but active and intent about it; (for as time is diminished, and in part lost by

by sloth or slackness; so it is enlarged, and, as it were, multiplied by industry; my day is two in respect of his, who doeth but half my work.) Not (also) to consume our time in fruitless pastimes, and curious entertainments of fancy; being idly busie about impertinences and trifles (we call it sport, but 'tis a serious damage to us;) not to immerse our selves in multiplicities of needless care about secular matters, which may distract us, and bereave us of fit leisure for our great employment; that which our Saviour calls *Luke 10. 42.* *τυβάζεαι περὶ πολλὰ, to keep a great deal of doe and stir (to be jumbled about as it were, and confounded) about many things; and, περισπᾶς περὶ πολλῷ διακονίαν, to be distracted and perplexed about much combersome service; which St. Paul calls περιπλέκεαι ταῖς τῆ βίης 1 Tim. 2. 4. πραγματείαις, to be implicated and entangled (as in a net) with the negotiations of this present life; so that we shall not be expedite, or free to*
bestir

bestir our selves about our more weighty affairs. The spending much time about those things doth steal it from these; yea, doth more than so, by discomposing our minds so that we cannot well employ what time remains upon our spiritual concerns. But especially we should not prostitute our time upon vitious projects and practices; doing which is not onely a prodigality of the present time, but an abridgment of the future; it not onely doth not promote or set forward our business, but brings it backward; and makes us more work than we had before; 'tis a going in a way directly contrary to our journey's-end. The Scripture aptly resembles our life to a wayfaring, a condition of travel and pilgrimage; now he that hath a long journey to make, and but a little time of day to pass it in, must in reason strive to set out soon, and then to make good speed; must proceed on directly, making no stops or deflections (not calling in at every sign that invites him,

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him, not standing to gaze at every object seeming new or strange to him ; not staying to talk with every Passenger that meets him ; but rather avoiding all occasions of diversion and delay) lest he be surprized by the night, be left to wander in the dark, be excluded finally from the place whither he tends : So must we in our course towards Heaven and Happiness ; take care that we set out soon (procrastinating no time, but beginning instantly to insist in the ways of Piety and Virtue) then proceed on speedily, and persist constantly ; no-where staying or loitering, shunning all impediments and avocations from our Progress ; lest we never arrive near, or come too late unto the gate of Heaven. *St. Peter* tells us, that the end of all things doth approach, and thereupon advises us *to be sober, and* 1 Pet. 4. 7. *to watch unto prayer ;* for that the less our time is, the more intent and industrious it concerns us to be. And, *St. Paul* enjoins us to *redeem*
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Eph. 5. 15.

Gen. 47. 9.
Job 14. 1.

Job 14. 14.

Luke 21. 34.

the time, because the days are evil; that is, since we can enjoy no true quiet or comfort here, we should improve our time to the best advantage for the future; he might have also adjoined, with the Patriarch *Jacob*, the paucity of the days to their badness; because *the days of our life are few and evil*, let us redeem the time; *Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble*: So few indeed they are, that 'tis fit we should lose none of them, but use them all in preparation toward that great change we are to make; that fatal passage out of this strait time into that boundless eternity. So, it seems, we have *Job's* example of doing: *All the days* (says he) *of my appointed time will I wait till my change come*. I end this Point with that so comprehensive warning of our Saviour: *Take heed to your selves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life; and so that day come upon you unawares. Watch ye there-*

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therefore and pray, that ye may be counted worthy to escape — and to stand before the son of man.

V. I shall adjoin but one use more, to which this consideration may be subservient, which is, that it may help to beget and maintain in us (that which is the very heart and soul of all goodness) Sincerity. Sincerity in all kinds, in our thoughts, words and actions. To keep us from harbouring in our breasts such thoughts, as we would be afraid or ashamed to own : from speaking otherwise than we mean, than we intend to doe, than we are ready any-where openly to avow ; from endeavouring to seem what we are not ; from being one thing in our expressions and conversations with men ; another in our hearts, or in our closets. From acting with oblique respects to private interests or passions, to humane favour or censure (in matters, I mean, where duty doth intervene,

Rom. 12. 17.

tervene, and where pure conscience ought to guide and govern us) from making professions and ostentations (void of substance, of truth, of knowledge, of good purpose) great semblances of peculiar sanctimony, integrity, scrupulosity, spirituality, refinedness. like those *Pharisees* so often therefore taxed in the Gospel; as also from palliating, as those men did, designs of ambition, avarice, envy, animosity, revenge, perverse humour, with pretences of zeal and conscience. We should indeed strive to be good (and that in all real strictness, aiming at utmost perfection) in outward act and appearance, as well as in heart and reality; for the glory of God and example of men (*providing things honest in the sight of all men*) but we must not shine with a false lustre, nor care to seem better than we are, nor intend to serve our selves in seeming to serve God; bartering spiritual commodities for our own glory or gain.

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For since the day approaches when
 God will judge τὰ κρυφὰ ἀνθρώ- Rom. 2. 16.
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 ly conceal; when God shall bring Eccl. 12. 14.
 every work into judgment, with every
 secret thing, whether it be good, or
 whether it be evil; since we must all 2 Cor. 5. 10.
 appear (or rather, be all made ap- Οὐ γὰρ κρυ-
 parent, be manifested and discover- ψται ἡμῖς
 ed) at the tribunal of Christ; since ἀπλῶς εἶ,
 there is nothing covered, which shall ἀλλὰ καὶ φα-
 not be revealed; nor hid, that shall νεωδύναι.
 not be known; so that whatever is Chrysost.
 spoken in the ear in closets, shall be
 proclaimed on the house tops: Since
 at length, and that within a very
 short time (no man knows how
 soon) the whispers of every mouth
 (the closest murmurs of detraction,
 slander and sycophantry) shall
 become audible to every ear; the
 abstrusest thoughts of all hearts (the
 closest malice and envy) shall be dis-
 closed in the most publick Theatre,
 before innumerable spectators; the
 truth of all pretences shall be
 thoroughly examined; the just merit

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of every Person, and every cause shall with a most exact scrutiny be scann'd openly in the face of all the World; to what purpose can it be to juggle or baffle for a time; for a few days (perhaps for a few minutes) to abuse, or to amuse those about us with crafty dissimulation or deceit? Is it worth the pains to devise plausible shifts, which shall instantly, we know, be detected and defeated; to bedaub foul designs with a fair varnish, which death will presently wipe off; to be dark and cloudy in our proceedings, whereas a clear day (that will certainly dispel all darkness and scatter all mists) is breaking in upon us; to make veils for our faces, and cloaks for our actions, whereas we must very shortly be exposed, perfectly naked and undisguised, in our true colours, to the general view of Angels and Men? Heaven sees at present what we think and do, and our conscience cannot be wholly ignorant or insensible; nor can Earth

cause it self be long unacquainted there-
 ny be with. Is it not much better, and
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 those be upright in our intentions, confi-
 lation stent in our discourses, plain in our
 ins to dealings, following the single and
 n shall uniform guidance of our reason and
 tected conscience, than to shuffle and shift,
 e signs wandring after the various uncer-
 h will tain and inconstant opinions or hu-
 k and mours of men ? What matter is it,
 hen as what cloaths we wear, what garb
 ly dis- we appear in, during this posture
 mists of travel and sojourning here ; what
 ke vi- for the present we go for ; how men
 ks for esteem us, what they think of our
 very actions ? *St. Paul* at least did not
 nake much stand upon it ; for *with me*,
 e co- said he, *'tis a very small thing* (ἐλα- 1 Cor. 4 3
 f An- 2500, the least thing that can come
 t pre- under consideration) *to be judged of*
 , and you, or of humane day (that is, of
 ly ig this present transitory, fallible, re-
 Earth versible judgment of men.) If we

1 Cor. 3. 13.

mean well and doe righteously, our conscience will at present satisfie us, and the divine (unerring and impartial) sentence will hereafter acquit us; no unjust or uncharitable censure shall prejudice us; if we entertain base designs, and deal unrighteously; as our conscience will accuse and vex us here, so God will shortly condemn and punish us; neither shall the most favourable conceit of men stand us in stead. *Every man's work shall become manifest; for the day shall declare it; because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire (that is, a severe and strict inquiry) shall try every man's work, of what sort it is.* I cannot insist more on this Point; I shall onely say, that considering the brevity and uncertainty of our present state, the greatest simplicity may justly be deemed the truest wisdom; that who deceives others doth cozen himself most; that the deepest policy (used to compass or to conceal bad designs) will in the end appear the most downright folly.

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I might add to the precedent discourses, that *Philosophy* it self hath commended this consideration as a proper and powerfull instrument of vertue; reckoning the practice thereof a main part of wisdom; the greatest proficient therein in common esteem, *Socrates*, having defined *Philosophy* (or the study of wisdom) to be nothing else, but (μελέτη θανάτου) *the study of death*; intimating also (in *Plato's Phædon*) that this study, the meditation of death and preparation of his mind to leave this World, had been the constant and chief employment of his life. That likewise, according to experience, nothing more avails to render the minds of men sober and well composed, than such spectacles of Mortality as do impress this consideration upon them. For whom doth not the sight of a Coffin or of a Grave gaping to receive a friend perhaps, an ancient Acquaintance; however a man in nature and state altogether like our selves; of the mournfull

Τὸ ἔχει ἡ
τελειότης τῆς
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σαν ἡμέραν ὡς
τελευταίαν
διεξάγειν.
Anton. lib. 7.

looks and habits, of all the sad pomps and solemnities attending man unto his long home, by minding him of his own frail condition, affect with some serious, some honest, some wise thoughts? And if we be reasonable men, we may every day supply the need of such occasions, by representing to our selves the necessity of our soon returning to the dust; dressing in thought our own Herfes, and celebrating our own Funerals; by living under the continual apprehension and sense of our transitory and uncertain condition; dying daily, or becoming already dead unto this World. The doing which effectually being the gift of God, and an especial work of his Grace, let us of him humbly implore it, saying after the Holy Prophet, *Lord, so teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.* Amen.

SERMON III.

The Danger and mischief of delaying Repentance.

PSALM CXIX. 60.

I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy Commandments.

THIS Psalm (no less excellent in vertue, than large in bulk) containeth manifold reflexions upon the nature, the properties, the adjuncts and effects of God's Law, many spightly ejaculations about it (conceived in different forms of speech; some in way of petition,

some of thanksgiving, some of resolution, some of assertion or aphorism) many usefull directions, many zealous exhortations to the observance of it; the which are not ranged in any strict order, but, (like a variety of fair flowers and wholesome herbs in a wild field) do with a gratefull confusion lie dispersed, as they freely did spring up in the heart, or were suggested by the devout spirit of him, who indited the *Psalm*; whence no coherence of sentences being designed, we may consider any one of them absolutely or singly by it self.

Among them, that which I have picked out for the subject of my discourse, implieth an excellent rule of practice, authorised by the *Psalmist's* example; it is propounded in way of devotion or immediate address to God; unto whose infallible knowledge his conscience maketh an appeal concerning his practice; not as boasting thereof, but as praising God for it, unto
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whose gracious instruction and succour he frequently doth ascribe all his performances : But the manner of propounding I shall not insist upon; the rule it self is, that speedily, without any procrastination or delay, we should apply our selves to the observance of God's Commandments ; the practice of which rule it shall be my endeavour to recommend and press.

It is a common practice of men, that are engaged in bad courses, which their own conscience discerneth and disapproveth, to adjourn the reformation of their lives to a farther time, so indulging themselves in the present commission of sin, that yet they would seem to purpose, and promise themselves hereafter to repent, and take up: Few resolve to persist finally in an evil way, or despair of being one day reclaimed, but immediately and effectually to set upon it, many deem un-

Recognosce singulos, considera universos, nullius non vita spectat in crastinum; non enim vivunt, sed victuri sunt.

Sen. Ep. 45.

Victuros agimus semper, nec vivimus unquam. Mañil. 4.

Prov. 6. 10.

unseasonable or needless ; it will, they presume, be soon enough to begin to morrow or next day, a month or a year hence, when they shall find more commodious opportunity, or shall prove better disposed thereto ; in the mean time with Solomon's sluggard, *Yet, say they, a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands ;* let us but neglect this duty, let us but satisfy this appetite, let us but enjoy this bout of pleasure ; hereafter, God willing, we mean to be more careful, we hope that we shall become more sober : So like bad debtors ; when our conscience dunneeth us, we always mean, we always promise to pay ; if she will stay a while, she shall, we tell her, be satisfied ; or like vain spendthrifts, we see our estate fly, yet presume that it will hold out, and at length we shall reserve enough for our use. *Εἰς αὖριον τὰ σπένδαλα, Let serious business stay till the morrow,* was a saying that cost dear to him who said it ; yet

Plut. in Pelop.

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we in our greatest concerns follow him.

But how fallacious, how dangerous and how mischievous this manner of proceeding is; how much better and more advisable it is, after the example propounded in our Text, speedily to betake our selves unto the discharge of our debt and duty to God, the following considerations will plainly declare.

*Non est crede
mihi sapientis
dicere, vivam.
Mart. I. 16.*

1. We may consider, that the observance of God's Commandments (an observance of them proceeding from an habitual disposition of mind, in a constant tenour of practice) is our indispensable duty, our main concernment, our onely way to happiness; the necessary condition of our attaining salvation; that alone which can procure God's love and favour toward us; that unto which all real blessings here, and all blifs hereafter are inseparably annexed: *Fear God and keep his Commandments, Eccl. 12. 13.* for this is the whole of man; (the whole duty, the whole design, the whole

whole perfection, the sum of our wisdom, and our happiness.) *If thou wilt enter into life, keep the Commandments: The righteous Lord loveth righteousness, his countenance doth behold the upright; God will render to every man according to his works; these are Oracles indubitably clear, and infallibly certain; these are immovable terms of justice between God and Man, which never will, never can be relaxed; being grounded on the immutable nature of God, and eternal reason of things; if God had not decreed, if he had not said these things, they would not assuredly be true; for it is a foul contradiction to reason, that a Man ever should please God without obeying him; 'tis a gross absurdity in nature, that a Man should be happy without being good; wherefore all the wit in the World cannot devise a way, all the authority upon Earth (yea, I dare say, even in Heaven it self) cannot establish a condition, beside faithfull observance*

Matt. 19. 27. *whole perfection, the sum of our wisdom, and our happiness.) If thou wilt enter into life, keep the*

Psal. 11. 7. *Commandments: The righteous Lord*

Prov. 15. 9. *loveth righteousness, his countenance*

Rom. 2. 6. *doth behold the upright; God will*

Matt. 5. 18. *render to every man according to his*

Luke 16. 17. *works; these are Oracles indubita-*

Psal. 119. 15. *bly clear, and infallibly certain; these are immovable terms of justice between God and Man, which never will, never can be relaxed; being grounded on the immutable nature of God, and eternal reason of things; if God had not decreed, if he had not said these things, they would not assuredly be true; for it is a foul contradiction to reason, that a Man ever should please God without obeying him; 'tis a gross absurdity in nature, that a Man should be happy without being good; wherefore all the wit in the World cannot devise a way, all the authority upon Earth (yea, I dare say, even in Heaven it self) cannot establish a condition, beside faithfull ob-*

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servance of God's Law, that can save, or make us happy; from it there can be no valid dispensation, without it there can be no effectual absolution, for it there can be no acceptable commutation; nor in defect thereof will any faith, any profession, any trick or pretence whatever avail, or signifie any thing: Whatever expedient to supply its room superstition, mistake, craft, or presumption may recommend, we shall, relying thereon, be certainly deluded: If therefore we mean to be saved (and are we so wild as not to mean it?) if we do not renounce felicity (and do we not then renounce our wits?) to become virtuous, to proceed in a course of obedience, is a work that necessarily must be performed; and why then should we not instantly undertake it; wherefore do we demur or stick at it? how can we at all rest quiet, while an affair of so vast importance lieth upon our hands, or until our mind be freed of all uncertain-

tainty and suspense about it? Were a probable way suggested to us of acquiring great wealth, honour or pleasure, should we not quickly run about it, could we contentedly sleep, till we had brought the business to a sure or hopeless issue? and why with less expedition or urgency should we pursue the certain means of our present security and comfort, of our final salvation and happiness? in doing so, are we not strangely inconsistent with our selves?

Again, disobedience is the certain road to perdition; that which involveth us in guilt and condemnation, that which provoketh God's wrath and hatred against us, that which assuredly will throw us into a state of eternal sorrow and wretchedness: *The foolish shall not stand in God's sight, he hateth all the workers of iniquity; If ye do not repent, ye shall perish. The wicked shall be turned into Hell, and all the people that forget God; The unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God; The wicked*

Psal. 5. 5.

Luke 13. 3.

Psal. 9. 17.

1 Cor. 6. 9.

Matth. 25. 46.
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wicked shall go into everlasting punishment; these are denunciations no less sure than severe, from that mouth, which is never opened in vain; from the execution whereof there can be no shelter or refuge; And what wise man, what man in his right senses would for one minute stand obnoxious to them? Who that any-wise tendereth his own welfare would move one step forward in so perillous and destructive a course? the farther in which he proceedeth, the more he discomfitteth from happiness, the nearer he approacheth to ruine.

In other cases common sense prompteth men to proceed otherwise; for who, having rendred one his enemy that far overmatcheth him, and at whose mercy he standeth, will not instantly sue to be reconciled? who being seised by a pernicious disease, will not haste to seek a cure? who being fallen into the jaws of a terrible danger, will not nimbly leap out thence? and such plainly is our case; while we persist
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Prov. 23. 34.

in sin, we live in enmity and defiance with the Almighty, who can at his Pleasure crush us; we lie under a fatal plague, which, if we do not seasonably repent, will certainly destroy us; we incur the most dreadful of all hazards, abiding in the confines of death and destruction; God frowning at us, guilt holding us, Hell gaping for us: Every Sinner is (according to the *Wise-man's* expression) *as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast*; and he that is in such a case, is he not mad or senseless, if he will not forthwith labour to swim out thence, or make all speed to get down into a safer place? can any man with comfort lodge in a condition so dismally ticklish?

2. We may consider, that in order to our final welfare we have much work to dispatch, the which requireth as earnest care and painfull industry, so a competent long time; which, if we do not presently fall on, may

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may be wanting, and thence our work be left undone, or imperfect: To conquer and correct bad inclinations, to render our sensual appetites obsequious to reason, to compose our passions into a right and steady order, to cleanse our souls from vanity, from perverseness, from sloth, from all vitious distempers, and in their room to implant firm habits of vertue; to get a clear knowledge of our duty, with a ready disposition to perform it; in fine, to season our minds with holy affections, qualifying us for the presence of God, and conversation with the blessed Spirits above; these are things that must be done, but cannot be done in a trice; it is not *dictum factum*, as soon done as said; but, *ὑπομονὴ ἐργῶν ἀγαθῶν*, a Rom. 2. 7. *patient continuance in well-doing* is needfull to atchieve it; for it no time can be redundant, the longest life can hardly be sufficient: *Art is long, and life is short*, may be an Aphorism in Divinity as well as in Physick; the art of living well, of preserving our

I Soul's

Soul's health, and curing its distempers, requireth no less time to compass it, than any other Art or Science.

Οὐ καθεύδουσιν ἡμῖν ἄγγελος βοήθησεν ὁ Θεός ἀλλὰ πονημένοις.
Chrys. ad Eph.
λογκα.

Vertue is not a Mushroom, that springeth up of it self in one Night, when we are asleep or regard it not: But a delicate Plant, that groweth slowly and tenderly, needing much pains to cultivate it, much care to guard it, much time to manure it, in our untoward soil, in this World's unkindly weather: happiness is a thing too pretious to be purchased at an easie rate, Heaven is too high to be come at without much climbing; the Crown of Bliss is a Prize too noble to be won without a long and a tough conflict. Neither is a vice a spirit that will be conjured down by a charm, or with a *Presto* driven away; it is not an adversary, that can be knocked down at a blow, or dispatched with a stab. Whoever shall pretend at any time easily with a celerity, by a kind of *Legerdemain* or by any mysterious knack, a Man may

O quam istud parum putant, quibus tam facile videtur!
Quint. 12. 1.

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may be settled in vertue, or converted from vice, common experience abundantly will confute him; which sheweth, that a habit otherwise (setting miracles aside) cannot be produced or destroyed, than by a constant exercise of acts suitable or opposite thereto; and that such acts cannot be exercised without voiding all impediments and framing all Principles of action (such as temper of body, judgment of mind, influence of custome) to a compliance; that who by temper is peevish or cholerick, cannot without mastering that temper become patient or meek; that who from vain opinions is proud, cannot without considering away those opinions prove humble: that who by custome is grown intemperate, cannot without weaning himself from that custome come to be sober; that who from the concurrence of a sorry nature, fond conceits, mean breeding and scurvy usage is covetous; cannot without draining all

those sources of his fault, be turned into liberal. The change of our mind is one of the greatest alterations in nature, which cannot be compassed in any way, or within any time we please; but it must proceed on leisurely and regularly, in such order, by such steps, as the nature of things doth permit; it must be wrought by a resolute and laborious perseverance; by a watchfull application of mind in voiding Prejudices, in waiting for advantages, in attending to all we doe; by forcible wresting our nature from its bent, and swimming against the current of impetuous desires; by a patient disentangling our selves from practices most agreeable and familiar to us; by a wary fencing with temptations, by long struggling with manifold oppositions and difficulties; whence the Holy Scripture termeth our practice a warfare, wherein we are to fight many a bloody battel with most redoubtable foes; a combat, which must be managed with our
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best skill, and utmost might; a race, which we must pass through with incessant activity and swiftness.

If therefore we mean to be good or to be happy, it behoveth us to lose no time; to be presently up at our great task; to snatch all occasions, to embrace all means incident of reforming our hearts and lives.

As those who have a long journey to go, do take care to set out early and in their way make good speed, lest the night overtake them before they reach their home; so it being a great way from hence to Heaven, seeing we must pass over so many obstacles, through so many Paths of duty before we arrive thither, it is expedient to set forward as soon as can be, and to proceed with all expedition; the longer we stay, the more time we shall need, and the less we shall have.

Ἀλλ' ἄγε νῦν ἵομεν, ὅτι γὰρ
μέμβλωκε μάλιστ' ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ
τύχᾳ τοῖς ποτὶ ἔσπερα ῥίγιον ἔ-
σαι. Hom. Od. ε'.
But now let us go, for it is
most dangerous for us to be
delayed by chance towards the
evening.

3. We may consider, that no future time which we can fix upon will be more convenient than the present is for our reformation. Let us pitch on what time we please, we shall be as unwilling and unfit to begin as we are now ; we shall find in our selves the same indispositions,

Cras hoc fiet ; idem cras fiet, &c.
Perf. Sat. 5.

Qui non est hodie, cras minus aptus erit.
Ovid. de Rom. I. Epiet. 4. 12.

the same averfeness, or the same listlessness toward it as now : There will occur the like hardships to deter us, and the like Plea-

tures to allure us from our duty ; objects will then be as present and will strike as smartly upon our senses ; the case will appear just the same, and the same Pretences for delay will obtrude themselves ; so that we shall be as apt then as now to prorogue the business. We shall say then, to morrow I will mend ; and when that morrow cometh, it will be still to morrow, and so the morrow will prove endless. If like the simple Rustick, (who stay'd by the

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the River side waiting till it had done running, that so he might pass dry-foot over the chanel) we do conceit, that the sources of sin (bad inclinations within, and strong temptations abroad) will of themselves be spent or fail, we shall find our selves deluded.

If ever we come to take up, we must have a beginning with some difficulty and trouble; we must courageously break through the present with all its enchantments; we must undauntedly plunge into the cold stream; we must rouse our selves from our bed of sloth; we must shake off that brutish improvidence which detaineth us, and why should we not assay it now? there is the same reason now that ever we can have! yea, far more reason now; for if that we now begin, hereafter at a-

—qui recte vivendi prorogat horam,
Rusticus expectat dum defluat amnis, at ille
Labitur, & labetur in omne volubilis ævum.

Hor. Ep. I. 2.

Εἰ μὲν λυσιτελεῖς ἢ ὑπέρ-
τερος ὄζειν, ἢ παντὸς ἀπόστα-
σις αὐτῆς ὄζει λυσιτελεῖς.
Epiſt. 4. 12.

For the same reason we put it off, we should put it away. If it be good at all, it is good at present.

ny determinate time, some of the work will be done, what remaineth will be shorter and easier to us. Nay farther,

Παρεῖ τὸ σήμερον ἁμαρτίνεις τὰλλα χεῖρον ἀνάγκη σοι τὰ πρῶτα γινώσκεις. Epict. 4. 12.

4. We may consider, that the more we defer, the more difficult and painfull our work must needs prove; every day will both enlarge our task, and diminish our ability to perform it: Sin is never at a stay; if we do not retreat from it, we shall advance in it; and the farther on we go, the more we have to come back; every step we take forward, (even before we can return hither, into the state wherein we are at present) must be repeated; all the web we spin must be unravelled; we must vomit up all we take in; which to doe we shall find very tedious and grievous.

Vice as it groweth in age, so it improveth in stature and strength; from a puny Child it soon waxeth a lusty Stripling, then riseth to be a sturdy Man, and after a-while becometh a massy Giant, whom we shall

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shall scarce dare to encounter, whom we shall be very hardly able to vanquish; especially seeing that as it groweth taller and stouter, so we shall dwindle and prove more impotent; for it feedeth upon our vitals, and thriveth by our decay; it waxeth mighty by stripping us of our best forces; by enfeebling our reason, by perverting our will, by corrupting our temper, by debasing our courage, by seducing all our appetites and passions to a treacherous compliance with it self; every day our mind groweth more blind, our will more resty, our spirit more faint, our appetites more fierce, our passions more headstrong and untameable: The power and empire of sin do strangely by degrees encroach, and continually get ground upon us, till it hath quite subdued and enthralled us; first we learn to bear it, then we come to like it, by and by we contract a friendship with

Falsis opinionibus tanto quisque inseritur, quanto magis in eis, familiariusque volutatur.
Aug. Ep. 117.

with it, then we dote upon it, at last we become enslaved to it in a bondage which we shall hardly be able, or willing to shake off; when not only our necks are fitted to the yoke, our hands are manacled, and our feet shackled thereby; but our heads and hearts do conspire in a base submission thereto: When vice hath made such impression on us, when this pernicious weed hath taken so deep root in our mind, will and affection, it will demand an extremely toilsome labour to extirpate it.

Indeed by continuance in sin, the chief means (afforded by nature, or by grace) of restraining, or reducing us from it, are either cut off, or enervated and rendered ineffectual.

Natural modesty, while it lasteth,

Μέγιστον πρὸς ἀρετὴν συνδύμα ἢ αἰδώς. Greg. Naz. Or. 26.

—nam quis

Peccandi finem posuit, sibi quando recepit

Ejectum semel attrita de fronte ruborem?

Juv. Sat. 18.

is a curb from doing ill; Men in their first deflexions from vertue are bashfull and shy; out of regard to other Mens opinion, and ten-

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tenderneſs of their own honour they are afraid, or aſhamed to tranſgreſs plain rules of duty; but in proceſs this diſpoſition weareth out; by little and little they arrive to that character of the degenerate Jews, whom the *Prophets* call *impudent children*, having a *brow of braſs*, and *faces harder than a rock*; ſo that they commit ſin with open face, and in broad day, without any mask, without a bluſh; they deſpiſe their own reputation, and deſy all cenſure of others; they outface and outbrave the World, till at length with prodigious inſolence they come to boaſt of wickedneſs, and *glory in their ſhame*, as an inſtance of high courage and ſpecial gallantry.

Ezek. 2. 4.

3. 7.

Iſa. 48. 4.

Jer. 5. 3.

Prov. 21. 29.

Phil. 3. 19.

Conſcience is a check to beginners in ſin, reclaiming them from it, and rating them for it; but this in long ſtanders becometh uſeleſs, either failing to diſcharge its office, or aſſaying it to no purpoſe, having often been ſlighted, it will be

Ψυχὴ ἁπαξ ἀμαρτίας γευσα-
μένη καὶ ἀναλγητὸς διατεθεῖ-
σα πολλὴν παρέχει τῷ νοσή-
ματι τὴν πρεδικκίαν, &c. Chrys.
Tom. Orat. 64.

be weary of chiding ;
or if it be not whol-
ly dumb , we shall be
deaf to its reproof :

As those who live by
cataracts or downfalls of Water are
by continual noise so deafened as
not to hear or mind it , so shall we
in time grow senseless , not regard-
ing the loudest Peals and Ratlings
of our conscience.

(Ezek. 2. 4.

3. 7.

Neh. 9. 29.

2 Chron. 36.

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Dan. 5. 20.)

Isa. 48. 4.

Quo quis pejus
se habet, minus
sentit. Sen.

Ep. 53.

Eph. 4. 19.

The Heart of a raw Novice in im-
piety is somewhat tender and soft ,
so that remorse can pierce and
sting it ; his neck is yielding and
sensible, so that the yoke of sin doth
gall it ; but in stout Proficients the
heart becometh hard and stony, the
neck stiff and brawny ; (*an iron si-*
new , as the *Prophet* termeth it) so
that they do not feel or resent any
thing ; but are like those of whom
St. Paul speaketh ; οἵτινες ἀπηλγημό-
τες , who *being past feeling* all sor-
row or smart, *have given themselves*
over unto lasciviousness , to work all
uncleanness with greedness.

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When first we nibble at the Bait ,
or enter into bad courses , our rea-
son doth contest and remonstrate a-
gainst it , faithfully representing to
us the folly , the ugliness , the base-
ness , the manifold ill consequences
of sinning ; but that by continuance
is muffled so as not to discern , or
muzzled so as not to declare ; yea ,
often is so debauched as to excuse ,
to avow and maintain , yea , to ap-
plaud and extol our miscarriages .

For a time a Man retaineth some
courage , and a hope that he may
repent ; but progress in sin dispi-
riteth and casteth into despair ; whe-
ther God be placable , whether him-
self be corrigible ; an apprehension
concerning the length of the way ,
or the difficulty of the work dis-
courageth , and despondency ren-
dreth him heartless and careless to
attempt it . There is no Man that
hath heard of God , who hath not
at first some dread of offending him ,
and some dissatisfaction in transgres-
sing his will ; it appearing to his
mind

Pfal. 10. 4.
36. 1.

mind (not yet utterly blinded and depraved) a desperate thing to brave his irresistible Power , an absurd thing to thwart his infallible Wisdom , a detestable thing to abuse his immense Goodness ; but obstinacy in sin doth quash this conscientious awe ; so that at length *God is not in all his thoughts , the fear of God is not before his eyes ;* the Wrath of the Almighty seemeth a Bugbear , the fiercest menaces of Religion sound but as Rattles to him.

Jer. 48. 11.
Zeph. 1. 12.

As for the gentle Whispers and Touches of Divine Grace, the monitory Dispensations of Providence, the good advices and wholesome reproofs of Friends, with the like means of reclaiming sinners ; these to Persons *settled on their lees*, or fixed in bad custome, are but as gusts of Wind brushing an old Oak, or as Waves dashing on a Rock, without at all shaking or stirring it.

Now

Now when any Person is come to this pass, it must be hugely difficult to reduce him; to retrieve a defloured Modesty, to quicken a jaded Conscience, to supple a callous Heart, to settle a baffled Reason, to rear a dejected Courage, to recover a Soul miserably benumbed and broken, to its former vigour and integrity, can be no easie matter.

The diseases of our Soul no less than those of our Body; when once they are inveterate,

they are become more incurable; the longer we forbear to apply due remedy, the more hard their cure will prove; if we let them

proceed far, we must e'er we can be rid of them, undergo a course of Physick very tedious and offensive to us; many a rough Purge, many a fore Phlebotomy, many an irksome Sweat we must endure. Yea farther,

—*frustra medicina paratur,
Cum mala per longas invaluere
moras.* Ovid.

Ἐάντων ἀπ' ἀρχῆς μὴ ἐνδεῖναι
κακία, ἢ προσεῖσθαι διαφυ-
γεῖν, ἢ προσελίνουσιν ἀναχόψασθαι.
Greg. Naz. Orat. 26.

5. We

5. We may consider, that by delaying to amend, to doe it may become quite impossible; it may be so in the nature of the thing, it may be so by the will of God: The thing may become naturally impossible; for vice by custome may pass into nature, and prove so congenial, as if it were born with us; so that we shall propend to it as a stone falleth down, or as a

spark flieth upward: By soaking in Voluptuousness we may be so transformed into Brutes, by sleeping in

malice so converted into Fiends, that we necessarily shall act like creatures of that kind, into which we are degenerated; and then no-wise without a downright Miracle are we capable of being reformed.

Prov. 6. 9.

How long, saith Solomon, wilt thou sleep, O Sluggard, when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? We may be so often called on, and 'tis not easie to awaken us, when we are got into a

spiritu-

Ἐπειδὴν εἰς φρενίτιν ἐκπε-
σόντες λακτίζωσι καὶ δύνανται
τὸς βελονήρας ἀπαλλάξαι τὴν
ἀρρώστιας αὐτῶν, τότε νοσήσιν
ἀνίατα. Chryf. in Babyl. Orat. 2.

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spiritual slumber ; but when we are, Eph. 2. 1.
dead in trespasses and sins, so that Apoc. 3. 1.
all breath of holy affection is stopt, 1 Tim. 5. 6.
and no spiritual pulse from our heart
doth appear ; that all sense of duty
is lost, all appetite to good doth fail,
no strength or activity to move in
a good course doth exert it self; that
our good complexion is dissolved,
and all our finer spirits are dissipa-
ted ; that our mind is quite crazed,
and all its Powers are shattered or
spoiled, when thus, I say, we are
spiritually dead, how can we raise
our selves, what beneath omnipo-
tency can effect it ? as a stick, when Frangas citius
once 'tis dry and stiff, you may quam corrigas
break it, but you can never bend it quæ in prævum
into a streighter posture, so doth the induruerant.
Man become incorrigible, who is Quintil. 1. 3.
settled and stiffened in vice. The
stain of habitual sin may sink in so
deep, and so thoroughly tincture
all our Soul, that we may be like
those People, of whom the Prophet
saith, *Can the Ethiopian change his* Jer. 13. 23.
skin, or the Leopard his spots ? then

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may ye do good, that are accustomed to doe evil: Such an impossibility may arise from nature; one greater and more insuperable may come from God.

John 3. 8.

To an effectual repentance the succour of divine grace is necessary; but that is arbitrarily dispensed; *the spirit bloweth where it listeth*, yet it listeth wisely, with regard both to the past behaviour, and present capacities of Men; so that to such who have abused it, and to such who will not treat it well, it shall not be imparted: And can we be well assured, can we reasonably hope, that after we by our presumptuous delays have put off God and dallied with his grace; after that he long in vain hath waited to be *gracious*; after that he hath endured so many neglects, and so many repulses from us; after that we frequently have slighted his open invitations, and smothered his kindly motions in us; in short, after we so unworthily have misused his
good-

goodness and patience, that he farther will vouchsafe his grace to us? when we have forfeited it, when we have rejected it, when we have spurned and driven it away, can we hope to recover it?

Τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς χάριτος ἐν-
υβείας.

Heb. 10. 29.

Ἀδύνατον.

Heb. 6. 4.

There is a time, a season, a day allotted to us; *our day* it is termed, *a day of salvation, the season of our visitation, an acceptable time*; wherein God freely doth exhibit grace, and presenteth his mercy to us; if we let this day slip, *the night cometh when no man can work*; when *the things belonging to our peace will be hidden from our eyes*; when (as the Prophet expresseth it) we shall *grope for the wall like the blind, and stumble at noon-day as in the night, and be in desolate places as dead men*; after that day is spent, and that comfortable light is set, a dismal night of darkness, of cold, of disconsolateness will succeed; when God being weary of bearing with Men doth utterly desert them, and delivereth them over to a reprobate

Luke 19. 42.

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2 Cor. 6. 2.

Heb. 3. 13.

John 9. 4.

Luke 19. 42.

Isa. 59. 10.

Jer. 15. 6.

Mal. 2. 17.

Isa. 1. 14. 7. 13.

Rom. 1. 24.

26, 28.

- mind*; when subtraſting his grati-
 Pfal. 81. 12. *ous direction and aſſiſtence, he gi-
 veth them over to their own hearts
 luſts, and to walk in their own coun-
 ſels*; when they are brought to
 complain with thoſe in the *Prophet*,
 Iſa. 63. 17. *O Lord, why haſt thou made us to err
 from thy ways, and hardned our heart
 from thy fear*? when like *Pharaoh*
 they ſurvive only as objects of God's
 juſtice, or occasions to glorify his
 Rom. 9. 17. *power*; when like *Eſau*, they can-
 not find a place of repentance,
 Heb. 13. 17. *although they ſeek it carefully with
 tears*; when as to the fooliſh
 Matth. 25. 10. *loitering Virgins, the door of mercy
 is ſhut upon them*; when the *maſter
 of the houſe doth riſe and ſhut the
 door, &c.* when that menace of di-
 vine wiſedom cometh to be execu-
 Luke 13. 25. *ted*; *They ſhall call upon me, but I
 will not answer*; *they ſhall ſeek me
 early, but they ſhall not find me*; for
 that they hated knowledge, and did
 not chuſe the fear of the Lord: And
 Prov. 1. 28. *if neglecting our reaſon, and preſent
 means, we once fall into this ſtate,*
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then is our case most deplorable ;
 we are dead Men irreversibly doom-
 ed, and only for a few moments
 reprieved from the stroke of final
 vengeance ; *we are vessels of wrath* Rom. 9. 22.
fitted (or made up) *for destruction* ;
 by a fatal blindness and obduration
 sealed up to ruine ; we are like the
terra damnata, that earth (in the
Apostle,) *which drinking up the rain,*
that cometh oft upon it, and bearing
thorns and briars, is rejected, and is
nigh unto cursing, and whose end is to
be burned. Wherefore according to
 the advice of the Prophet, *Seek ye*
the Lord, when he may be found, call
ye upon him, while he is near.

Κατηρησμεθα
 εις ἀπώλειαν.
 Heb. 6. 7, 8.

Isa. 55. 6.

It is true, that God is ever ready
 upon our true conversion to receive
 us into favour, that his arms are
 always open to embrace a sincere
 Penitent ; that he hath declared,
whenever a wicked man turneth from
his wickedness, and doeth that which
is right, he shall save his soul alive ;
 that if we do wash our selves, make
 us clean, put away the evil of our do-

Ezek. 18. 27.

Isa. 1. 18.

Joel 2. 13.

Pfal. 86. 5.

Luke 15. 18.

*Vid. Chryf. ad
Theod. 2.
Judas (faith
he there) was
capable of
pardon.*

*ings, and cease to do evil, then although our sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow, though they be like crimson they shall be as wool; that if we rend our hearts, and turn unto the Lord, he is gracious and mercifull, and will repent of the evil; that God is good and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy unto all that call upon him; that whenever a prodigal Son with humble confession and hearty contrition for his sin doth arise and go to his father, he will embrace him tenderly, and entertain him kindly; that even a profane Apostate, and a bloody Oppressour (as *Manasses*) a lewd Strumpet (as *Magdalene*) a notable Thief (as he upon the Cross) a timorous Renouncer (as *St. Peter*) a furious Persecutour (as *St. Paul*) a stupid Idolater (as all the *Heathen* World, when the *Gospel* came to them, was) the most heinous Sinner that ever hath been, or can be imagined to be, if he be disposed to repent, is capable of mercy; those*
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declarations and promises are infallibly true, those instances peremptorily do evince, that repentance is never super-annuated ; that if we can turn at all, we shall not turn too late, that *pænitentia nunquam sera, modo seria*, is an irrefragable rule ; yet nevertheless delay is very unsafe ; for what assurance can we have, that God hereafter will enable us to perform those conditions of bewailing our sins, and forsaking them ? have we not cause rather to fear that he will chastise our presumption by withholding his Grace ? for although God faileth not to yield competent aids to Persons who have not *despised his goodness and long-suffering that leadeth them to repentance* ; Rom. 2. 4 yet he that wilfully or wantonly loitereth away the time, and squandereth the means allowed him ; who refuseth to come when God calleth, yea woeth and courteth him to repentance, how can he pretend to find such favour ?

We might add, that supposing God in super-abundance of mercy might be presumed never to withhold his grace; yet seeing his grace doth not work by irresistible compulsion; seeing the worse qualified we are, the more apt we shall be to cross and defeat its operation; seeing that we cannot hope that hereafter we shall be more fit than now to comply with it: Yea, seeing we may be sure, that after our hearts are hardned by perseverance in sin, we shall be more indisposed thereto; we by delay of repentance do not onely venture the forfeiture of divine grace, but the danger of abusing it, which heinously will aggravate our guilt, and hugely augment our punishment.

Heb. 3. 13.

We should do well therefore most seriously to regard the *Apostle's* admonition; *Exhort one another to day, while it is called to day, lest any of you be hardned by the deceitfulness of sin*: Now that we find our selves invited to repent, now that we apprehend

prehend so much reason for it; now that we feel our hearts somewhat enclined thereto; now that we have time in our hands, and are not barr'd from hopes of mercy; now that it is not extremely difficult, or not absolutely impossible, let us in God's name lay hold on the occasion, let us speedily and earnestly set upon the work. Farther yet,

6. We should consider, that we are mortal and frail, and thence any designs of future reformation may be clipt off, or intercepted by death; which is always creeping towards us, and may for all we can tell be very near at hand. You say you will repent to morrow; but are you sure you shall have a morrow to repent in? have you an hour in your hand, or one minute at your disposal? have you a lease to shew for any term of life? can you claim or reckon upon the least portion of time without his leave, who bestoweth life, and deal-
eth

Qui penitenti veniam spondit, peccanti crastinum diem non promissit. Greg. in Evang. Hom. IX.

Job 12. 10.

14. 5. 7. 1.

Psal. 39. 4.

90. 12.

Dan. 5. 23.

Prov. 27. 1.

'Οὐκ οἶδας π

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ὑπαγγέλλῃς

τὴ μὴ σὺ.

Baf. M. exb.

ad Bapt.

eth out time, and ordereth all things as he pleaseth? Can you any-wise descry the just *measure of your days*, or the *bounds of your appointed time* without a special revelation from him, *in whose hands is your breath*; and *with whom alone the number of your months is registred*? Boast not thy self of to morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth, saith the *Wise-man*: boast not of it, that is, do not pretend it to be at thy disposal, presume not upon any thing that may befall therein; for whilst thou presumest thereon, may it not be said unto thee, as to the rich Projectour in the *Gospel*, * *Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee*. Doth not, seluding hidden decrees, every Man's life hang upon a thread very slender and frail? is it not subject to many diseases lurking within, and to a thousand accidents flying about us? how many, that might have promised themselves as fair scope as we can, have been unexpectedly snapt away? How many have

* Luke 12. 10.

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have been crompt in the flower of their age and vigour of their strength? Doth not every day present experiments of sudden death? Do we not continually see that observation of the *Preacher* verified, *Man* Eccles. 9. 12. *knoweth not his time; as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds are caught in the snare, so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it cometh suddenly upon them?* Old men are ready to drop of themselves, and young men are easily brushed or shaken down; the former visibly stand upon the brink of Eternity, the latter walk upon a bottomless Quag, into which unawares they may slump; who then can any-wise be secure? We are all therefore highly concerned to use our life, while we have it; to catch the first opportunity, lest all opportunity forsake us; to cut off our sinning, lest our selves be cut off before

Τι γὰρ οἶδας ἄνθρωπε ἁμαρτίας, εἰ ἡμέρας ζῆσεις ἐν τῷ δὲ τῷ βίῳ, ἵνα καὶ μετανοήσης, &c.
 Ὅτι ἀδηλοῦ ἢ ἔξοδος σε ἐν τῇ βίᾳ ἐπαρχεῖ, καὶ ἐν ἁμαρτίᾳ τελευτήσαντι μετάνοια ἐκ ἔσται, &c. Const. Ap. 2. 13.

- before it : And that the rather, because by lavishing, or misemploying our present time, we may lose the future, provoking God to bereave us of it; for as prolongation of time is a reward of Piety; as to observance of the Commandments it is promised, *Length of days, and long life, and peace shall be added unto thee*; so being immaturally snatched hence is the punishment awarded to impious practice; so it is threatned that *Evil men shall be cut off*; that *bloody and deceifull men shall not live out half their days*; that *God will wound the head of his enemies, and the hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on still in his wickedness*: the very being unmindfull of their duty is the cause, why men are thus surpris'd; for, *If* saith God, *thou dost not watch, I shall come upon thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know when I come upon thee*. And *If* (saith our Lord) *that servant doth say in his heart, my Lord delayeth his coming, &c. The Lord of that*
- Prov. 3. 2.
- Pfal. 37. 9.
- Pfal. 55. 23.
- Pfal. 68. 21.
- Rev. 3. 3. 16. 5.
- Luke 12. 45, 46.

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that servant will come in a day, when he looketh not for him, &c.

If then it be certain, that we must render a strict accompt of all our doings here; if by reason of our frail nature and slippery state, it be uncertain when we shall be summoned thereto; if our negligence may abridge and accelerate the term, is it not very reasonable to observe those advices of our Lord; *Watch*, Matth. 25. 13. *for ye do not know the day, nor the* ^{24. 42.} *hour, when the son of man cometh;* Mark 13. 33. Luke 12. 15, *Take heed to your selves, lest any time* 35. *your heart be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares: Let your loins be girded about, and your lamps burning, and ye your selves like men, that wait for your Lord: And to take the counsel of the Wise-man, Make no tarry-* Eccclus. 5. 5. *ing to turn unto the Lord, and put not off from day to day; for suddenly shall the wrath of the Lord come forth, and in thy security shalt thou be destroyed, and perish in the day of vengeance.* These

These considerations plainly do shew how very foolish, how extremely dangerous and destructive the procrastinating our reformation of life is: there are some others of good moment, which we shall reserve.

SER-

SERMON IV.

The Danger and mischief of delaying Repentance.

PSALM CXIX. 60.

I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy Commandments.

I Proceed to the Considerations which yet remain to be spoken to.

1. We may consider the causes of delay in this case (as in all cases of moment) to be bad and unworthy of a Man: What can they be but either stupidity, that we do not

Ἀργίας πρὸς
φασίς ἢ ἀνα-
βολή. Simpl.

*Animal hoc pro-
vidum, sagax,
Cic. de leg. 1.
Cic. de offic. 1.*

not apprehend the importance of the affair; or improvidence that we do not attend to the danger of persisting in sin; or negligence that we do not mind our concerns; or sloth that keepeth us from rowling and bestirring our selves in pursuance of what appeareth expedient; or faint-heartedness and cowardize, that we dare not attempt to cross our appetite, or our fancy; all which dispositions are very base and shamefull: It is the prerogative of humane nature to be sagacious in estimating the worth, and provident in descrying the consequences of things; whereas other creatures, by impulse of sense, do onely fix their regard on present appearances; which peculiar excellency by stupidity and improvidence we forfeit, degenerating into brutes; and negligence of that, which we discern mainly to concern us is a quality somewhat beneath those, depressing us below beasts, which cannot be charged with such a fault; sloth is

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no less despicable, rendring a man fit for nothing; nor is there any thing commonly more reproachfull than want of courage: so bad are the causes of delay.

2. And the effects are no less unhappy, being disappointment, damage, trouble and sorrow: As expedition (catching advantages and opportunities, keeping the spirit up in its heat and vigour, making forcible impressions where-ever it lighteth, driving on the current of success) doth subdue business, and achieve great exploits (as by practising his Motto, *to defer nothing*, Alexander did accomplish those mighty feats which make such a clatter in story; and Cæsar more by the rapid quickness and forwardness of undertaking, than by the greatness of courage, and skilfulness of conduct, did work out those enterprizes, which purchased to his Name so much glory and renown) so delay and slowness do spoil all

L

business,

Μηδὲν ἀνα-
καλλόβουτο.
Successu argere
suos, instare,
Ec. Luc. 1

Plerisque in rebus tarditas &
procrastinatio odiosa est. Cic.
Philip. 6.

business, do keep off success at distance from us, thereby opportunity

Ἄϊε δ' ἀμβολιεργὸς ἀνὴρ
ἄτρησι παλαίει. Hes.

*Dum deliberamus quando incipiendum est, incipere jam se-
rum est. Quint. 12. 7.*

is lost, and advantages slip away; our courage doth flag, and our spirit languisheth; our endeavours strike faint-

ly, and are easily repelled; whence disappointment necessarily doth spring, attended with vexation.

3. Again, we may consider, that to set upon our duty is a great step toward the performance of it; if we can resolve well, and a little push forward, we are in a fair way to

*Dimidium facti qui cepit ha-
bet. Hor. Ep. 1. 2.*

Μόνον ἀρχὴν ὀπίδες τὸ
πρόγραμμα, &c. Chrys. Tom. 6.
Orat. p. 68.

Τὸ δυσχερές καὶ δυσκατέρω-
τον τὸτο ἔστι τὸ δυναθῆναι
ἐπιθῆναι τῷ εἰσόδῳ καὶ τῷ προ-
σέειναι τῷ μετανοίας. Ib.
2. 79.

dispatch; *to begin* (they say) *is to have half done*; to set out, is a good part of the journey; to rise betimes is oft-
ner harder than to doe all the days work; en-
tring the Town, is al-

most the same with taking it; it is so in all business, it is chiefly so in moral practice: For if we can find in our hearts to take our leave of sin,
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our selves from the
witcheries of present
allurement ; if we can

*Honestas, quæ principio anxietas
habetur, ubi contigerit, voluptati
luxuriæque habetur. Viêt.
in Sept. Sev.*

but get over the threshold, of ver-
tuous conversation, we shall find the
rest beyond expectation smooth and
expedite ; we shall discover such
beauty in vertue, we shall tast so
much sweetness in obedience as
greatly will encourage us to pro-
ceed therein.

4. Again, we may consider, that
our time it self is a gift, or a talent
committed to us, for the improve-
ment whereof we are responsible no
less than for our Wealth, our Power,
our Credit, our Parts, and other
such advantages, wherewith for the
serving of God, and furthering our
own salvation we are intrusted : *To*
redeem the time is a Precept ; and of
all Precepts the most necessary to
be observed, for that without re-
deeming (that is embracing and
well employing) time we can do
nothing well ; no good action can

*Eph. 5. 16.
Col. 4. 5.*

Πολυτέλεσται
τον ἀνάλωμα.

be performed, no good reward can be procured by us: Well may we be advised to take our best care in husbanding it, seeing justly of all things it may be reckoned most precious; its price being inestimable, and its loss irreparable; for all the World cannot purchase one Moment of it more than is allowed us, neither can it, when once gone, by any means be recovered: So much indeed as we save thereof, so much we preserve of our selves; and so far as we lose it, so far in effect we slay our selves, or deprive our selves of life; yea by mispending it we do worse than so; for a dead sleep, or a cessation from being, is not so bad as doing ill; all that while we live backward, or decline toward a state much worse than annihilation it self. Farther

*Omnia quæ
ventura sunt in
incerto jacent,
protinus vive.
Sen. de vit.
brev. 9.*

5. Consider, that of all time the present is ever the best for the purpose of amending our life; It is the only sure time, that which we have in our hands, and may call our own;

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whereas the past time is irrevocably gone from us; and the future may never come to us: It is absolutely (reckoning from our becoming sensible of things, and accomptable for our actions) the best, as to our capacity of improving it;

Optima quæque dies miseris mortalibus ævi Virg. Georg. 3.
Prima fugit

Our best days do first pass away, was truly said; the nearer to its source our life is, the purer it is from stain, the freer from clogs, the more susceptible of good impressions, the more vivid and brisk in its activity; the farther we go on, especially in a bad course, the nearer we verge to the dregs of our life; the more dry, the more stiff, the more sluggish we grow; delay therefore doth ever steal away the flower of our age, leaving us the bran and refuse thereof. Again,

6. If at any time we do reflect upon the time that hath already slipped away unprofitably from us, it will seem more than enough, and

(if we consider well) it will be grievous to us to lose more; the morrow will seem too late to commence a good life; ἀνευρεὶς δὲ παρ-

*Sera nimis vi-
ta est crastina,
vive hodie.*

Mart. 1. 16.

1 Pet. 4. 3.

ἀνελυθὲς χρόνον, *The time past of our*

life (saith St. Peter) may suffice us

to have wrought the will of the Gen-

tiles, or to have continued in ill

courses; more indeed it might than

suffice; it should be abundantly too

much to have imbezilled so large

portion of our pretious and irrepa-

rable time: After we have slept in

neglect of our duty, ὥρα ἤδη ἐστίν

Rom. 13. 11.

ἡώρα, it is (as St. Paul saith) now

high time to awake, unto a vigilan-

observance thereof: this we should

the rather do, if we consider, that

7. For illliving now we should

come hereafter to be sorry, if we

with a wholesome contrition, we

with a painfull regret; we shall

certainly one day repent, if not of

sin, yet of our sinning; if not so

to correct for the future, yet so

to condemn our selves for what

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ving sacrilegiously robb'd our Ma-
 ker of the time due to his service;
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 our souls of the opportunities gran-
 ted to secure their welfare; of our
 having profusely cast away our most
 pretious hours of life upon vanity
 and folly, will some time twitch us
 sorely. There is no man who doth
 not with a sorrowfull eye review an
 ill-past life; who would not gladly
 recall his mispent time; *O mihi præ-*
teritos! O that God would restore
 my past years to me, is every such
 Man's Prayer, although it never was
 heard, never could be granted unto
 any. And what is more inconsi-
 stent with wisdom, than to engage
 our selves upon making such ineffe-
 ctual and fruitless wishes? What is
 more disagreeable to reason, than to
 do that, for which we must be for-
 ced to confess and call our selves
 fools? What Man of sense for a flash
 of transitory Pleasure, for a puff of
 vain repute, for a few scraps of dirty
 Pelf would plunge himself into such a
 gulf of anguish?

*Ille sapit quisquis, Posthume,
vixit heri.* Mart. 5. 60.

8. On the contrary, if laying hold on occasion, we set our selves to do well, reflexion thereon will yield great satisfaction and pleasure to us; we shall be glad that we have done, and that our task is over;

*Ampliat ætatis spatium sibi
vir bonus, hoc est*

*Vivere his, vita posse priore
frui.* Mart. 10. 23.

we shall enjoy our former life; Our time which is so past will not yet be lost unto

us; but rather it will be most securely ours, laid up beyond the reach of danger, in the repository of a good conscience.

Rom. 2.

*Quam magna
deliquimus,
tam granditer
desseamus, &c.*
Cypr. de Laps.
Or. 5.

9. Again, all our time of continuance in sin we do *treasure up wrath*, or accumulate guilt; and the larger our guilt is, the sorer must be our repentance; the more bitter the sorrow, the more low the humbling, the more earnest the deprecation requisite to obtain pardon: the broader and deeper the stain is, the more washing is needfull to get it out; if we sin much and long, we must grieve answerably, or we shall be no fit objects of mercy.

10. And

10. And when ever the sin is pardoned, yet indelible marks and monuments thereof will abide. We shall eternally be obliged to cry *peccavi*; although the punishment may be remitted, the desert of it cannot be removed; a

Pena potest demi, culpa perennis erit. Ovid.

Ἡ συχώρησις ἐμύρετο τῶν ἁμαρτημάτων ὡς πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ ἡ μνήμη τῶν συγκεχωρημένων ἁμαρτημάτων ἐκ ἡφανίζετο ὡς πρὸς Παύλ. Chrys. Tom. 8. p. 97.

scar from it will stick in our flesh; which ever will deform us; a tang of it will stay in our memory, which always will be disgustfull; we shall never reflect on our miscarriages without some confusion and horror; incessantly we shall be liable to that question of St. Paul, *What Rom. 6. 21. fruit had ye of those things, whereof ye are now ashamed?* If therefore we could reasonable presume, yea if we could certainly foresee, that we should hereafter in time repent, yet it were unadvisably to persist in sin, seeing it being once committed, can never be reversed; never expunged from the registers of time, never dashed out from the tables of our mind

Ezek. 16. 61.

Ezek. 16. 63.

Ezek. 36. 31.

20. 43.

mind and memory ; but will perpetually rest as matter of dolefull consideration, and of tragical story to us. *Then shalt thou remember thy ways, and be ashamed. That thou mayst remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God: Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loath your selves in your own sight, for your iniquities, and for your abominations.*

11. Again, so much time as we spend in disobedience, so much of reward we do forfeit ; for commensurate to our works shall our rewards be ; the fewer our good works are in the course of our present life, the smaller shall be the measures of joy, of glory, of felicity dispensed to us hereafter ; the later consequently we repent, the less we shall be happy : *One star (saith the Apostle) differeth from another in glory ; and*

1 Cor. 15. 41.

and of all stars, those in the celestial sphere will shine brightest, who did soon rise here, and continued long by the lustre of their good works to glorify their heavenly Father; *for the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.* While therefore we let our interest lie dead by lolling, or run behind by finfull practice, we are very bad husbands for our soul; our spiritual estate doth thereby hugely suffer; every minute contracteth a damage that runneth through millions of ages, and which therefore will amount to an immense sum: And who for all the pleasures here would forego one degree of blisfull joy hereafter; who for all earthly splendours would exchange one spark of celestial glory; who for all the treasures below would let slip one gem out of his heavenly crown?

Prov. 4. 18.

12. Farther, let us consider that whatever our age, whatever our condition or case be, the advice not
to

to procrastinate our obedience is very futable and usefull.

*Sub pedagogo
cæperis licet;
serum est.
Mart. 8. 44.*

Art thou young? then it is most proper to enter upon living well. For when we set out, we should be put in a right way; when we begin to be Men, we should begin to use our reason well; life and vertue should be of the same standing; what is more ugly than a Child, that have learnt little, having learnt to do ill; than naughtiness springing up in that state of innocence? the foundation of good life is to be laid in that age, upon which the rest of our life is built; for this is the manner of our proceeding; the present dependeth always upon what is past; our practice is guided in notions that we had sucked in, is sway-ed by inclinations that we got before; whence usually our first judgments of things, and our first propensions to stretch their influence upon the whole future life. *Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it, saith the Wise-man.* That

Prov. 22. 6.

That age as it is most liable to be corrupted by vice, so it is most capable of being imbued with virtue : then nature is soft and pliable, so as easily to be moulded into any shape, ready to admit any stamp impressed thereon ; then the mind is a pure table, in which good principles may be fairly engraven, without raising out any former ill prejudices ; then the heart being a soil free of weeds, the seeds of goodness being cast therein will undisturbedly grow and thrive ; then the complexion being tender will easily be set into a right posture ; Our soul is then a Vessel empty and sweet ; good liquour therefore may be instilled, which will both fit it, and season it with a durable tincture ; the extreme curiosity and huge credulity of that age, as they greedily will swallow

Natura tenacissimi sumus eorum, quæ rudibus annis percipimus, &c. Quint. l. 1.

Difficulter eraditur quod rudēs animi perbiberunt. Hier. ad Latam.

Ut corpora ad quosdam membrorum flexus formari nisi tenera non possunt, sic animos ad pleraque duriores robur ipsum facit. Quint. ib.

Quo semel est imbuta recens servabit odorem Testa diu.

Hor. Ep. l. 2.

swallow any, so will they admit good instruction. If we do then imbibe false conceptions, or have bad impressions made on our minds, it will be hard afterwards to expell, or to correct them. Passion is then very fluid and moveable, but not being impetuously determined any way, may easily be derived into the right chanel. Then the quickness of our wit, the briskness of our fancy, the freshness of our memory, the vigour of our affections, the lusty and active mettle of our spirits being applied to vertuous studies

Ἡ δὲ γὰρ ὅτι χαλεπὸν ἢ νεότης, ὅτι εὐείπουν, ὅτι εὐεξαπότητον, ὅτι εὐόλιδον, καὶ σφοδρότερον δὲ χαλινῶ. Chrys. ἀνδ' α'.

and endeavours, will produce most noble fruits; the beauty of which will adorn us, the sweetness will please us, so as to leave on our minds a perpetual relish and satisfaction in goodness. Then being less encombred with the cares, less intangled in the perplexities, less exposed to the temptations of the World and secular Affairs, we can more easily set forth,

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we may proceed more expeditely in good courses. Then being void of that stinging remorse, which doth adhere to reflexions upon past follies, and mispent time, with more courage and alacrity we may prosecute good undertakings ; then beginning so soon to embrace vertue, we shall have advantage with more leisure, and more ease to polish and perfect it through our ensuing course of life ; setting out so early, in the very morning of our age, without much straining, marching on softly and fairly, we may go through our journey to happiness.

Our actions then are the first fruits of our life, which therefore are fit and due sacrifices to our Maker ; which if we do withdraw, we shall have nothing left so worthy or acceptable to present unto him ; will it be seemly to offer him the dregs and refuse of our age ; shall we not be ashamed to bring a crazy temper of body and soul, dry bones and decayed senses ; a dull fancy, a treacherous

cherous memory, a sluggish spirit before him? shall we then when we are fit for little begin to undertake his service? with our decrepid limbs and wasted strength shall we set our selves to *run the ways of his commandments*?

As it is uncomfortable to think of being parsimonious, when our stock is almost gone; so it is to become thrifty of our life, when it comes near the bottom. Δεινὴ ἐνὶ πνεύματι φειδῶ.

Pfal. 37. 38.

If we keep innocency, spend our youth well, it will yield unexpressible comfort to us; it will save us much sorrow, it will prevent many inconveniences to us: If we have spent it ill, it will yield us great displeasure, it will cost us much pains; we shall be forced sadly to bewail our folly and vanity therein; it will be bitter to see, that we must unlive our former life, and undoe all we have done; that we must renounce the Principles we have avowed, we must root out the ha-
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bits we have planted, we must forsake the Paths which we have beaten and so long trode in, if ever we will be happy ; it will be grievous to us, when we come with penitential regret to deprecate, *Lord remember not the sins of my youth ;* we shall feel sore pain, when our bones are full of the sins of our youth, and we come to possess the iniquities thereof.

It is therefore good (as the Prophet saith) that a man bear the yoke in his youth, when his neck is tender ; it is excellent advice which the Preacher giveth, *Remember thy Creatour in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, and the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say I have no pleasure in them.*

Aristotle saith, that young men are not fit bearers of moral doctrine ; because (saith he) they are unexperi-

M

Lam. 3. 27.
Fingit equum tenera docilem cervicem
vice Magister
Ire viam, quam monstrat eques.—
Hor.

Eth. 1. 3.
Τῆς πολιτικῆς οὐκ ἔστιν οἰκεί-
ος ἀκροατὴς ὁ νέος ἀπειρος
τῶν κατὰ τὸ βίον περὶ ἡμετέρας
ἐπὶ τοῖς παιδείᾳ ἀκολούθητικὸς
ἀνματαίως ἀκροῖται καὶ ἀνω-
φελῶς.

enced

enced in affairs of life ; and because they are apt to follow their passions, which indispose to hear with fruit or profit ; but his conclusion is false, and his reasons may be well turned against him ; for because young men want experience, therefore is there no bad prejudice, no contrary habit to obstruct their embracing sound doctrine ; because their passions are vehement and strong, therefore being rightly ordered, and set upon good objects they with great force will carry them to vertuous practice ; that indeed is the best time to regulate and tame Passions ; as Horses must be broken when they are Colts, Dogs must be made when they are Whelps, else they will never be brought to any thing. The *Poet* therefore advised better than the *Philosopher*,

Hor. Ep. 1. 2. — *nunc adhibe puer*
Peccatore verba puer, nunc te melioribus offer ;

Eph. 6. 4. and St. Paul plainly doth confute him, when he biddeth Parents to educate their children in the nurture
 and

and admonition of the Lord; when he
 chargeth Titus, that he exhort young Tit. 2. 6.
 men to be sober-minded; when he
 commendeth Timothy, for that he 2 Tim. 2. 22.
 had *ἄπο βρέφους* from his infancy 2 Tim. 3. 15.
 known the Holy Scriptures; So doth
 the Psalmist, when he saith, *Where-* Psal. 119. 9.
with shall a young man cleanse his way?
by taking heed according to thy word.
 And Solomon, when he declareth Prov. 1. 4.
 that his moral Precepts did serve to
 give subtilty to the simple, to the
 young man knowledge and discretion;
 when he biddeth us to train up a Prov. 22. 6, 15.
 child in the way he should go; St. Pe- 1 Pet. 2. 2.
 ter doth intimate the same, when
 he biddeth us, as new born babes to
 desire the sincere milk of the word;
 and our Saviour, when he said, *Suf-* Luke 18. 16.
fer little children to come unto me,
for of such is the kingdom of God; that
 is the more simplicity and inno-
 cence a Man is endued with, the
 more apt he is to embrace and com-
 ply with the Evangelical Doctrine:
Aristotle therefore was out, when
 he would exclude young men from

Eth. 2. 2.

the Schools of Vertue. It is observable that he contradicteth himself; for *Ὁυ μικρὸν διαφέρει τὸ ἔργον ἢ ἔργας, ἐν δὲ καὶ νέον ἐδίδεατο, ἀλλὰ πάντοτε, μάλλον ὢ τὸ πᾶν.* It is (saith he) of no small concernment to be from youth accustomed thus or thus; yea 'tis very much, or rather all: And how shall a young man be accustomed to do well, if he be not allowed to learn what is to be done?

Again, are we old? it is then high time to begin; we have then less time to spare from our most important business; we stand then in most imminent danger, upon the edge of perdition, and should therefore be nimble to skip out thence; our forces being diminished, our quickness and industry should be encreased; the later we set out, the

more speed it becometh us to make. If we stay, we shall grow continually more indisposed and unfit to amend,

Quod facere solent qui serius exeunt — calcar addamus. Sen. Ep. 68. 76. 10.

Apoc 3. 2. *Σπείξον τὰ λοιπὰ, ἃ μέλλει ἀποθανεῖν.*

amend, it will be too late, when utter decrepitness and dotage have seised upon us; and our body doth survive our soul. When so much of our time, of our parts, of our strength are fled, we should husband the rest to best advantage, and make the best satisfaction we can unto God, and unto our souls with the remainder.

This age hath some peculiar advantages, which we should embrace; the froth of humours is then boiled out, the fervours of lust are flaked, passions are allayed, appetites are flatted; so that then inclinations to sin are not so violent, nor doth the enjoyment thereof so much gratify.

Long experience then hath discovered the vanity of all worldly things, and the mischief of ill courses; so that we can then hardly admire any thing, or be fond of en-

M 3

joying

— non omnia grandior ætas
Quæ fugiamus habet — Ovid.

Ἡ μὲν γὰρ νεότης πελάγει
πρὸς τοῖκε μαυνομήνῳ, κυμάτων
ἀγέλειον, καὶ πνευμάτων γέμοντι
πνευμάτων· ἢ ὅτι πολὺ ὥσπερ εἰς
λιμῶνα ἀκύμαντον τὰς τῶν γέ-
νησκότων ὀρμίζει ψυχὰς, πα-
ρέχουσα τῇ ᾠδῇ τῇ ἡλικίας ἐν-
τευφάν ασφαλεία. Chrys. Tom. 6.
Orat. 38.

joying what we have found unprofitable or hurtfull.

Age is excused from compliance with the fashions, and thence much exempted from temptations of the World; so that it may be good without obstacle or opposition.

It is proper thereto to be grave and serious, and consequently to be vertuous; for gravity without virtue and seriousness about vain things are ridiculous.

Nothing doth so adorn this age as goodness, nothing doth so disgrace it as wickedness; *The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness*; but it is a mark of Infamy, if it be observed proceeding in a course of iniquity, it signifieth that experience hath not improved it, it argueth incorrigible folly, or rather incurable madness therein.

There is indeed no care, no employment proper for old Men but to prepare for their dissolution; to be bidding adieu to the World with
its

its vain Pumps and mischievous Pleasures ; to be packing up their Goods, to be casting their Accompts, to be fitting themselves to abide in that state into which they are tumbling, to appear at that Bar, before which suddenly nature will set them. As a Ship, which hath long been tost and weather-beaten, which is shattered in its timber, and hath lost much of its rigging, should do nothing in that case but work toward the Port, there to find its safety and ease ; so should a Man, who having past many storms and agitations of the World is grievously battered and torn with Age, strive onely to die well, to get safe into the Harbour of eternal Rest.

In freto viximus, moriamur in portu. Sen. Ep. 19.

In fine, *Epicurus* himself said well, that *no man is either immature or over-ripe in regard*

Ἄνθρωπος οὐδὲν ἢ ὀκνητός ἢ ὑπερμακρὺς ἐστὶν ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ. Epic. ad Monac.

to his souls health ; we can never set upon it too soon, we should never think it too late to begin ; to live well is always the best thing we

can do, and therefore we should at any time endeavour it; there are common reasons for all ages, there are special reasons for each age, which most strongly and most clearly do urge it; it is most seasonable for young Men, it is most necessary for old Men, it is most adviseable for all Men *.

* *Quare juvenis, imo omnis aetas*

(neque enim recte voluntati serum est tempus ullum) totis mentibus huc tendamus, in hoc elaboremus; forsitan & consummare contingat. Quint. 12. 1.

Again, be our condition what it will, this advice is reasonable: Are we in health? we owe God thanks for that excellent gift, and the best gratitude we can express is the improving it for his service and our own good; we should not lose the advantage of a season so fit for our obedience and repentance; while the forces of our body and mind are entire, while we are not discomposed by pain or faintness, we should strive to dispatch this needfull work, for which infirmity may disable us.

Are

Are we sick? it is then time to consider our frailty, and the best we can to obviate the worst consequences thereof: It is then very fit, when we do feel the sad effects of sin, to endeavour the prevention of worse mischiefs that may follow; it is seasonable, when we lie under God's correcting hand to submit unto him, to deprecate his wrath, to seek reconciliation with him by all kinds of obedience suitable to that state; with serious resolutions to amend hereafter, if it shall please God to restore us; it is most adviseable, when we are in the borders of death to provide for that state, which lieth just beyond it.

Are we rich and prosperous? 'tis expedient then presently to amend, lest our Wealth do soon corrupt us with Pride, with Luxury, with Sloth, with Stupidity; lest our Prosperity Prov. I. 32. becometh an inevitable snare, an irrecoverable bane unto us.

Are we poor or afflicted? it is then also needfull to repent quickly; that

that we may have a comfortable support for our soul, and a certain succour in our distress; that we may get a treasure to supply our want, a joy to drown our sorrow; a buoy to keep our hearts from sinking into desperation and disconsolateness. This condition is a medicine, which God administreth for our soul's health; if it do not work presently so as to doe us good, it will prove both grievous and hurtfull to us.

13. Lastly, we may consider, that abating all the rufull consequences of abiding in sin, abstracting from the desperate hazards it exposeth us to in regard to the future life, it is most reasonable to abandon it, betaking our selves to a vertuous course of practice. For vertue in it self is far more eligible than vice, to keep God's Commandments hath much greater convenience than to break them; the life of a good Man in all considerable respects is highly to be preferred above the life of a bad Man: for what is vertue, but a way of li-

ving

Est virtus nihil aliud quam in se perfecta, & ad summum perducta natura, Cic. de Leg. 1.

ving that advanceth our nature into a similitude with God's most excellent and happy nature ; that promoteth our true benefit and interest ; that procureth and preserveth health, ease, safety, liberty, peace, comfortable subsistence, fair repute, tranquillity of mind, all kinds of convenience to us ? to what ends did our most benign and most wise Maker design and suit his Law, but to the furthering our good, and securing us from mischief, as not onely himself hath declared, but reason sheweth, and experience doth attest ? What is vice but a sort of practice which debaseth and disparageth us, which plungeth us into grievous evils, which bringeth distemper of body and soul, distress of fortune, danger, trouble, reproach, regret, and numberless inconveniences upon us ? which for no other reason, than because it so hurteth and grieveth us, was by our loving Creatour interdicted to us ? Vertue is most noble and worthy, most lovely, most profitable,

Deut. 10. 13.
Mic. 6. 8.
Neh. 9. 13.
Rom. 7. 12.
Psal. 19. 9.
119. 107.

fitable, most pleasant, most creditable ; vice is most sordid and base, ugly, hurtfull, bitter, disgracefull, in it self, and in its consequences. If we compare them together, we shall find, that vertue doth always preserve our health, but vice commonly doth impair it; that vertue improveth our estate, vice wasteth it; that vertue adorneth our reputation, vice blemisheth it; that vertue strengthneth our parts, vice weakneth them; that vertue maintaineth our freedom, vice enslaveth us; that vertue keepeth our mind in order and peace, vice discomposeth and disquieteth it; vertue breedeth satisfaction and joy, vice spawneth displeasure and anguish of conscience: to enter therefore into a vertuous course of life, what is it but to embrace happiness; to continue in vitious practice, what is it but to stick in misery?

By entring into good life, we enter into the favour and friendship of God, engaging his infinite power and
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wisdom for our protection, our succour, our direction and guidance; enjoying the sweet effluxes of his mercy and bounty; we therewith become friends to the holy Angels, and blessed Saints, to all good Men, being united in a holy and happy consortship of judgment, of charity, of hope, of devotion with them; we become friends to all the World, which we oblige by good wishes, and good deeds, and by the influence of good example; we become friends to our selves, whom we thereby enrich and adorn with the best goods; whom we gratifie and please with the choicest delights: but persisting in sin we continue to affront, wrong, and displease our Maker, to be disloyal toward our Sovereign Lord; to be ingratefull toward our chief Benefactor, to disoblige the best Friend we have, to provoke a most just and severe Judge; to cope with Omnipotency, to contradict Infallibility, to enrage the greatest Patience, to abuse immense Goodness:

ness : We thereby become enemies to all the World, to God, whom we injure and dishonour ; to the friends of God, whom we desert and oppose ; to the creatures which we abuse to our pride, lust and vanity ; to our neighbours, whom we corrupt, or seduce ; to our selves, whom we bereave of the best goods, and betray to the worst evils.

Beginning to live soberly, we begin to live like Men, following the conduct of reason ; beginning to live in charity, we commence the life of Angels, enjoying in our selves most sweet content, and procuring great benefit to others ; but going on in sinfull voluptuousness, we proceed to live like beasts, wholly guided by sense, and swayed by appetite ; being pertinacious in malice we continue to be like fiends, working torment in our selves, and mischief to our neighbours.

Embracing vertue we become wise and sober Men, worthy and honourable, beneficial and usefull to
the

the World : but continuing in vice, we continue to be foolish and vain, to be vile and despicable, to be worthless and useless.

By our delay to amend, what do we gain ? what, but a little flashy and transient pleasure instead of a solid and durable peace ; but a little counterfeit profit instead of real wealth ; but a little smoak of deceitfull opinion instead of unquestionable sound honour ; shadows of imaginary goods instead of those which are most substantial and true, a good mind, the love of God, the assured welfare of our souls. But this field of discourse is too spacious, I shall onely therefore for conclusion say, that speedily applying our selves to obedience, and breaking off our sins by repentance, is in effect nothing else but from a present Hell in trouble, and the danger of a final Hell in torment to be translated into a double Heaven ; one of joyfull tranquillity here, another of blissfull rest hereafter ; unto the which
Almighty

Almighty God in his mercy bring us all, through Jesus Christ our Lord; to whom for ever be all glory and praise. *Amen.*

1 Theff. 5. 23. *The very God of peace sanctifie you wholly, and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

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